PINOCHET'S BIZARRE EXIT—TINA ROSENBERG

DECEMBER 18, 1989 · $2.95

THE NEW REPUBLIC

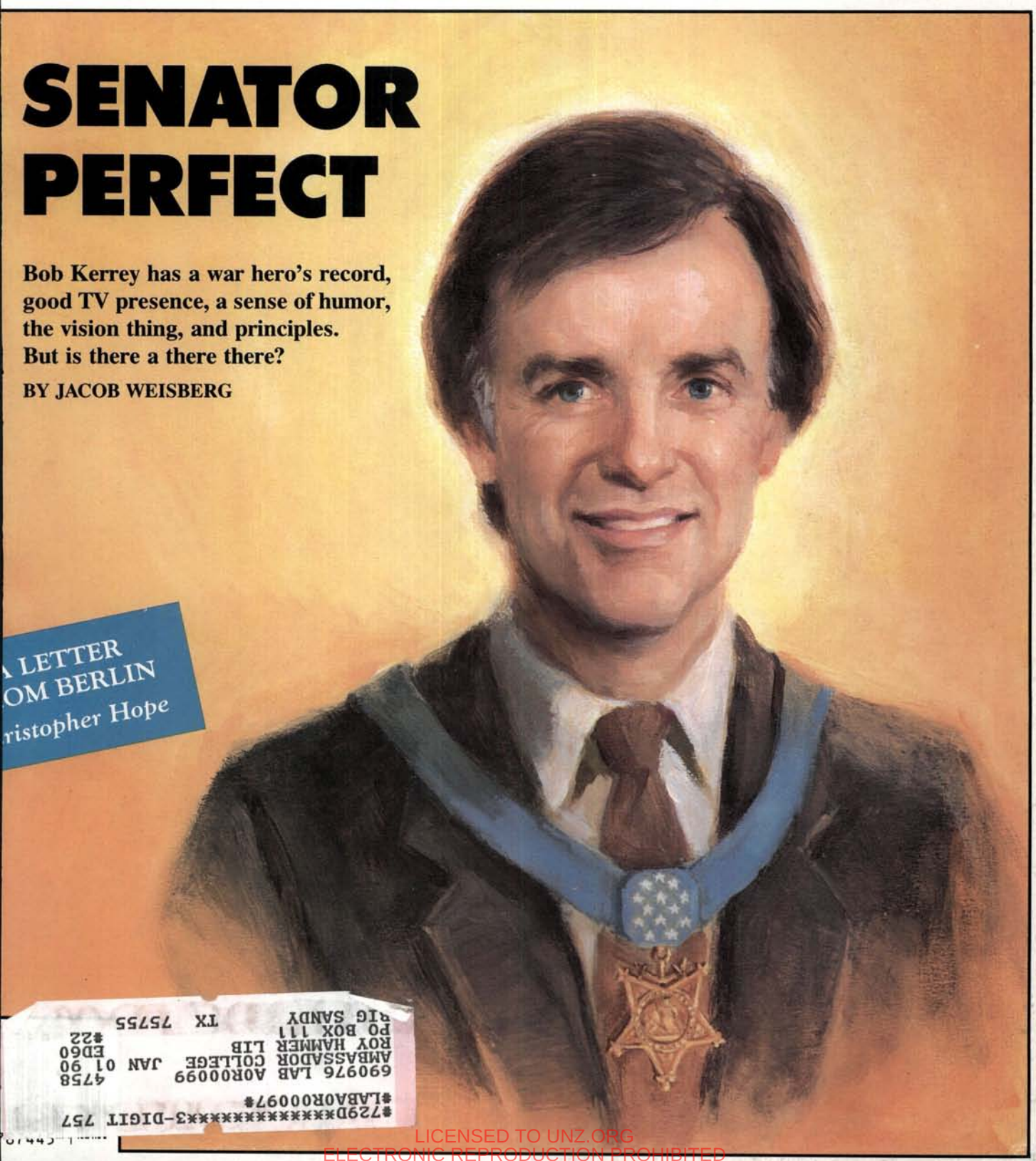
Alfred Kazin on Nabokov · Denis Donoghue on Ulster · Eddie Murphy's ego

SENATOR PERFECT

Bob Kerrey has a war hero's record, good TV presence, a sense of humor, the vision thing, and principles. But is there a there there?

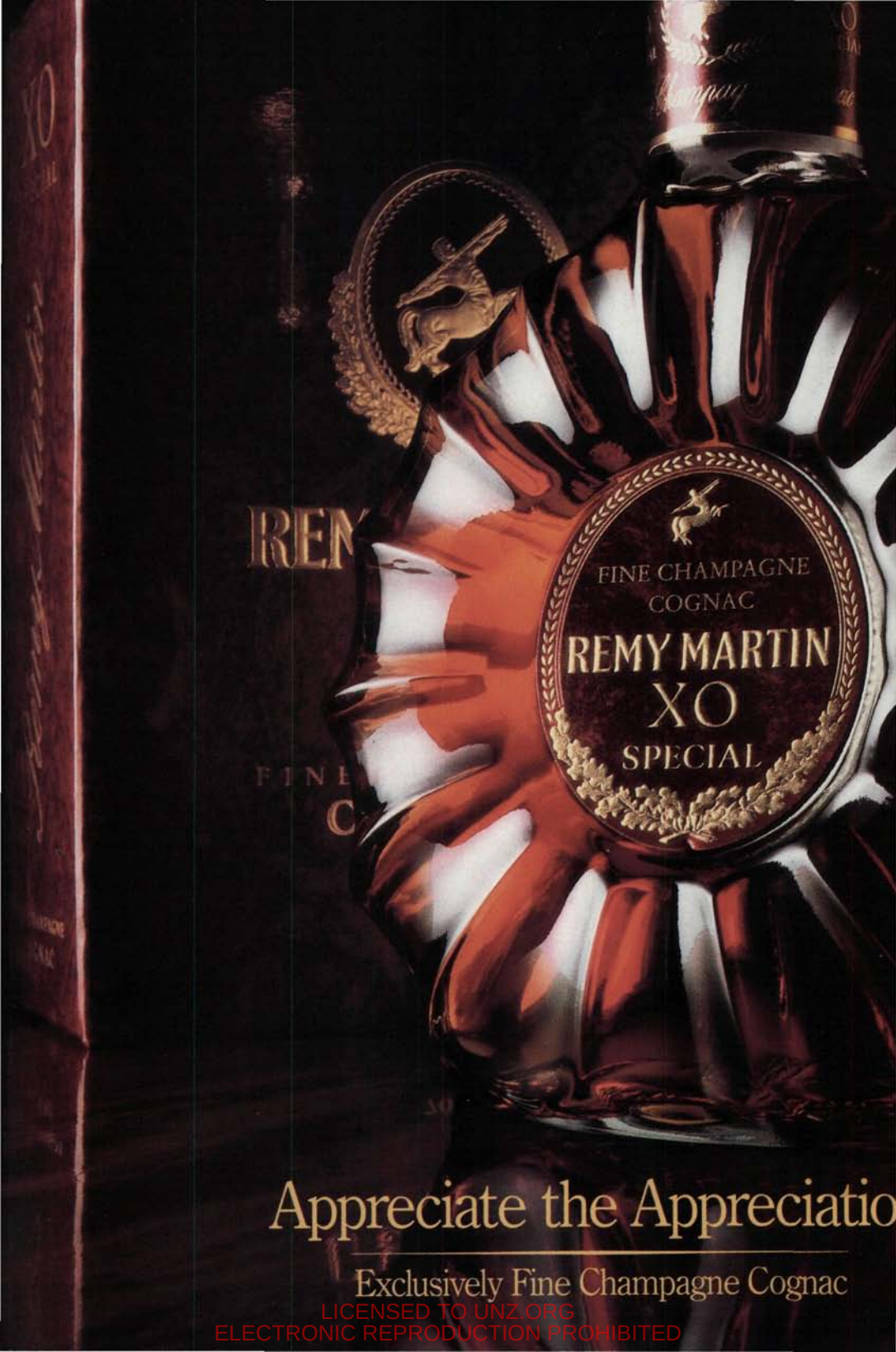
BY JACOB WEISBERG

A LETTER
OM BERLIN
ristopher Hope



#729D**********3-DIGIT 757
#LABAOR00097#
690976 LAB AOR00099 4758
AMBASSADOR COLLEGE JAN 01 90
ROY HAMMER LIB ED60
PO BOX 111 #22
RIG SANDY TX 75755

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Property of
LIBRARY
Big Sandy, Texas

THE NEW REPUBLIC

RECEIVED DEC 03 1989

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

Editor-in-Chief and Chairman
MARTIN PERETZ

Editor
HENDRIK HERTZBERG
Literary Editor
LEON WIESELTIER
Managing Editor
DOROTHY WICKENDEN
Senior Editors
FRED BARNES, ANN HULBERT,
MICKEY KAUS, MICHAEL KINSLEY,
MORTON KONDRACKE, ROBERT WRIGHT
Editor, New Republic Books (Basic Books)
BILL NEWLIN
Economics
ROBERT KUTTNER
Films STANLEY KAUFFMANN
Theater ROBERT BRUSTEIN
Music EDWARD ROTHSTEIN
Poetry RICHARD HOWARD
Art MARK STEVENS
Architecture HERBERT MUSCHAMP
Contributing Editors
ROBERT COLES, HENRY FAIRLIE,
JAMES K. GLASSMAN, CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER,
VINT LAWRENCE, LOUIS MENAND, ADAM MICHNIK,
ROBERT B. REICH, JONATHAN RIEDER,
MAGGIE SCARF, RONALD STEEL,
DYLAN VANCE STEINKE, RICHARD L. STROUT,
E. V. THAW, ANNE TYLER,
NICHOLAS VON HOFFMAN,
MICHAEL WALZER, C. VANN WOODWARD
Associate Editor
JACOB WEISBERG
Editorial-Corporate Coordinator
LAURA E. OBOLENSKY
Assistant to the Editors
JUNE HALEY
Assistant Editor
LEONA HIRAOKA ROTH
Production Manager
BRUCE STEINKE
Assistant Production Manager
KRISTIN CONRADI
Production Associate
ERIC V. PETERSON
Literary Assistant
SARA MOSLE
Reporter-Researchers
DANIEL GROSS, DAVID P. HAMILTON,
WESTON KOSOVA

President
JEFFREY L. DEARTH
Publisher
JOAN M. STAPLETON
Associate Publisher
TOM HICKS
Controller
JEAN GANDY
Advertising Manager
JENNIFER BARRETT
Circulation Director
PATTY JONES
Accounting Manager
CHRISTINA R. OVERHOLSER
Advertising Assistant
DARLENE BUSCAGLIO
Accounting Assistant
JULIE HAWKINS
Circulation Assistant
PATTI NAJDA
Back Issues and Reception
CAROLYN PARHAM
Corporate Marketing
GUY STODDARD
Leadership Network Advertising
ROBERT E. SENNOTT JR.

DECEMBER 18, 1989

FOUNDED 1914
WASHINGTON, D.C.
ISSUE 3,909

Cover by Denise Watt for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Article on page 16.

4 MICHAEL KINSLEY **TRB: ESSENTIAL READING** OK, OK, I'm reading as fast as I can.

6 CORRESPONDENCE In pursuit of democracy, George Gilder, &c.

7 THE EDITORS **PRAGUE SPRUNG** The ten days that shook Czechoslovakia. **NOTEBOOK** The bloody usual in Lebanon, Jesse Jackson's Farrakhan problem, &c.

9 FRED BARNES **WHITE HOUSE WATCH: LUCKY GEORGE** Through no fault of his own, President Bush got what he wanted out of Congress's last session.

12 ROBERT BAZELL **SCIENCE AND SOCIETY: CANCER WARP** Half a million Americans will die from cancer this year. A look at why we're losing the war.

14 CHRISTOPHER HOPE **SEEING IS BELIEVING** At Berlin's vast family reunion, the long-lost relatives hardly know each other.

16 JACOB WEISBERG **SENATOR PERFECT** Nebraska freshman Bob Kerrey impresses Democrats hungry for a hero with his political sex appeal and his leadership on issues of conscience. But will his substantive accomplishments match his vision?

20 TINA ROSENBERG **FALL OF THE PATRIARCH** Gen. Augusto Pinochet can't stop Chile from democratizing. But he's trying.

24 STANLEY KAUFFMANN **ON FILMS: DOING THE RIGHT THING?** Eddie Murphy's decline: foul-mouthed, gun-slinging *Harlem Nights*.

26 ROBERT ALTER **THE SPIRITS AND THE LETTERS** *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem, 1932-1940* edited by Gershom Scholem, translated by Gary Smith and Andre Lefevere

31 RICHARD JENKYNS **DOG DAYS** *Ackerley: The Life of J. R. Ackerley* by Peter Parker

32 DAVID LEHMAN **POEM** *Literal Lives*

34 ALFRED KAZIN **THE MATTER WITH STYLE** *Vladimir Nabokov: Selected Letters 1940-1977* by Vladimir Nabokov, edited by Dmitri Nabokov and Matthew J. Bruccoli

37 DENIS DONOGHUE **IRE LAND** *Ulster: Conflict and Consent* by Tom Wilson

39 PEARL K. BELL **LAST EXIT TO QUEENS** *The Other Side* by Mary Gordon

42 JAMES K. GLASSMAN **NEW ORLEANS DIARIST: APRÈS MOI, LE DÉLUGE** A flood of memories in the Big Easy.

THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 201, Number 25, Issue 3,909, December 18, 1989. (Printed in the U.S. on November 29, 1989.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 9 & 16, July 17 & 24, Aug. 7 & 14, and Sept. 18 & 25, 1989) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. Leadership Network advertising (212) 684-5500. Yearly subscriptions, $59.97; foreign, $89.97; Canada, $74.97. Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage & handling). ©1989 by The New Republic, Inc. (ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Available on microfilm from University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and Bell & Howell, Old Mansfield Road, Wooster, OH 44691. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscribers: Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 56515, Boulder, CO 80322. For subscription problems call 800-274-6686.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TRB®
FROM WASHINGTON

Essential reading

Somebody once held a contest: If you were the author of a book, and could have any words of praise to feature in an ad for it, what would they be? Most entries were on the order of, "Destroys the philosophical basis of all previous human thought—Hannah Arendt" or "I laughed 'til I cried—Mohandas K. Gandhi" or "If you read only one book this year, that's one more than I've read . . . I mean, make it this one—Ronald Reagan." But the winner was eloquent in its simplicity: "six-figure paperback sale."

This efficiently makes the key point about book blurbs: fine words butter no parsnips. Has anyone ever actually bought a book because John Kenneth Galbraith—to name one of America's most prolific blurbists—said it was important, or scintillating, or a laff-riot, or an incredible turn-on, or whatever? Yet publishers continue to solicit blurbs from the author's friends and to scavenge reviews for phrases to quote out of context. It's a treasured industry ritual (of which book publishing has many) rather than a rational business practice.

Because excessive praise for books has become so routine, I've started a collection (contributions welcome) of comments, either solicited or in reviews, that for one reason or another are double-edged. Sometimes it's the name attached that makes the intended puff self-defeating. A recent issue of the *Washington Monthly*, for example, contained an ad for a book titled *How to Win in Washington*. Emblazoned across the top was the inspirational message: "Essential reading—Stuart E. Eisenstat." Eisenstat, younger readers may need to be told, was one of President Jimmy Carter's top strategists. It would be like a book titled *How to Win in Afghanistan* with a blurb from Leonid Brezhnev.

More often the ambiguity is a matter of careless—or perhaps subconsciously subversive—wording. Former CIA Director William Colby has the following to say in an ad for *Guardians of the Arsenal: The Politics of Nuclear Strategy* by Janne Nolan (recently published by—ahem—New Republic Books): "Einstein's comment about the nuclear age remains true: a whole new way of thinking is needed. Janne Nolan shows how far we still have to go."

If they're not careful, the publishers of *Advise & Dissent*, the memoirs of former Senator James G. Abourezk, may be tempted to use for promotional purposes the opening lines of Philip Geyelin's recent favorable review in the *Washington Post Book World*: "You have never read—and are unlikely ever to read—political memoirs the likes of these." How true.

And, although the subject wasn't a book, a couple weeks ago *Time* began a glowing assessment of the new Broadway production of *The Merchant of Venice* by saying: "Dustin Hoffman plays Shylock, warts and all. . . ." At last, the bad side of Shylock. Whatever next? A saintly Maria in *The Sound of Music*?

Sometimes the subversion seems less subconscious than consciously self-defensive. A recent *New York Times Book Review* carried a large, blurb-chocked ad for *On Becoming a Leader* by someone named Warren Bennis. Peter Drucker offered the artfully qualified encomium: "This is Warren Bennis's most important book." In fact, on close reading, several ofthe blurbs in this ad seemed strangely off-key. *USA Today* said of the book: "Its ideas are wise enough to stand re-examination." Management guru Rosabeth Moss Kanter opined: "Sure to launch an exciting journey of self-exploration for future leaders." Is that good?

But the weariest and most implausible bit of puffery is the one Eisenstat offered: "essential reading." For the hell of it, I searched for the phrase "essential reading" in Nexis, the electronic data base of newspaper and magazine articles. There were 73 references so far in 1989. Strangely, the *Financial Times*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and the *Wall Street Journal* have all found the occasion this year to publish articles asserting that they themselves are "essential reading." But most of the references are to books. *Life Insurance: A Consumer's Handbook* is "absolutely essential reading," says *Forbes*. *Football In Its Place: An Environmental Psychology of Football Grounds* is "as they say, essential reading," says the *Guardian* of London, with justified defensiveness.

Arnold Beichman of the Hoover Institution announces in the *Washington Times* that a book called *The Liberal Conspiracy* is essential reading. That's easy for him to say, of course, lounging under a palm out there in Palo Alto with a glass of chardonnay, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, and a fellowship to pay the rent. Those of us with jobs may demur about this, as well as about *White Bandits of the West: the Silent Brotherhood Inside America's Racist Underground*. Charles Johnson declares in the *Los Angeles Times* that this book is "essential reading for all Americans." In fact, he says, "It is a work we cannot ignore if, as a nation, we hope to survive this century." I guess at least that gives me 11 years to get around to it.

Reviewers usually let most readers off the hook by specifying a subgroup of humanity to whom the tome is essential. *Hemingway in Paris* is essential reading only for "Hemingway fanatics." On the other hand *Armand Hammer: the Untold Story* is essential "for anyone *who was ever* fascinated by Armand Hammer" (emphasis added). Current lack of interest is no excuse. A book that is "essential reading for visitors to southern Venezuela" leaves visitors to northern Venezuela free to enjoy their trip. But few will escape a history of the American suburb; according to a *New York Times* reviewer, it is essential reading for "residents of Philadelphia, Chicago, Westchester County, Forest Hills, Queens, Shaker Heights, Ohio, and former borderlands everywhere."

I feel safe in skipping *Field Artillery and Firepower* by J. B. A. Bailey, which is essential reading only "for planners of army requirements, tactical operations, and joint operations." Ditto *The Arkrights: Spinners of Fortune* by R. S. Fulton, which is essential "for all serious students of early industrialism." But what about *Hector Berlioz* by David Cairns? It is "essential reading not only for the ardent Berliozian"—fair enough—"but for anyone with an interest in the history of romanticism." What courageous philistine dares to admit that he or she has no interest whatsoever in the history of romanticism? True, if I have such an interest, I have never done anything to feed it. But where better to start than with the "essential reading"?

I certainly can skip *Starting and Running a Bookshop*, which is "essential reading for anyone contemplating going into bookselling." Also that article in the *American Scholar* that, according to the *Washington Post*, is "essential reading for all those who love literature and suspect not much of it is being produced these days." I suspect all too much of it is being produced these days. In fact, as I logged out of my Nexis search for "essential reading," the computer popped me a message: "Additional items were added to this file while your research was in progress." Yikes! That's unfair. Hope there's no surprise quiz.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE FEDERALIST SOCIETY
PRESENTS

THE PRESIDENCY AND CONGRESS: CONSTITUTIONALLY SEPARATED AND SHARED POWERS

January 19–20, 1990
Mayflower Hotel
Washington, DC

At a previous Federalist Society Conference, President Bush remarked, "We must establish, under the law, with objectivity, what the proper balance between the branches is." Join us for this probing look into our American Government and how the separation of powers affects public policy.

Featuring America's top legal and policy experts

Judge Robert H. Bork

Secretary Richard Cheney

The Honorable Lloyd Cutler

Topics Include

- *Agency Autonomy and the Unitary Executive*
- *Presidential Lawmaking Powers*
- *Congressional Control of the Administration of Government*
- *The Role of the Courts*
- War Powers and the Constitution

Speakers

The Honorable Griffin Bell
Former U.S. Attorney General
Judge Robert H. Bork
American Enterprise Institute
Judge Stephen Breyer
U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit
Professor Stephen Carter
Yale Law School
Secretary Richard Cheney
Secretary of Defense
Mr. L. Gordon Crovitz
The Wall Street Journal
The Honorable Lloyd Cutler
Wilmer, Cutler & Pickering
Judge Frank Easterbrook
U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit
Mr. Louis Fisher
Senior Specialist (Separation of Powers) Congressional Research Service
The Honorable C. Boyden Gray
White House Counsel
Judge Laurence Silberman
U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit
The Honorable Kenneth Starr,
U.S. Solicitor General

Attorney General Richard Thornburgh

FOR REGISTRATION INFORMATION, CONTACT:

The Federalist Society
1700 K Street, NW
Suite 901
Washington, DC 20006
202-822-8138

Registration Fees

Conference Registration	
Dues-paying Member	$30.00
Non-member	$50.00
(add $10.00 to fee postmarked after Dec. 22)	
Friday evening banquet	$40.00
Membership (1 year)	$25.00
Saturday lunch	$18.00

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CORRESPONDENCE

Democracy outside America

To the editors:
Morton Kondracke argues that U.S. foreign policy should focus on democracy promotion because it serves an undefined national interest ("The Democracy Gang," November 6). In the same issue Charles Krauthammer ("The Curse of Legalism") argues that foreign policy should be derived from the national interest, which should not be constrained by international law or any other set of principles like democracy. I agree with him.

The pursuit of democracy requires more than just establishing elections. El Salvador, Nicaragua, South Korea, Haiti, and the Philippines illustrate the recent U.S. track record: sometimes successful in setting up competitive elections, but always failing to reduce the amount of violence and autonomous military power. Elections cannot be free so long as participation is constrained by violence.

If violence is an unavoidable consequence of American foreign policy, it is because the U.S. is pursuing its real national interests: anti-communism and political stability, which is not the same as promoting democracy. And if the U.S. cannot promote democracy without sending guns, then the ill-will toward the U.S. and its principles should be conceded by democracy's advocates. Otherwise, the specter is one of a missionary beckoning with a Bible in one hand and a gun in the other.

HENRY F. CAREY
Managua, Nicaragua

To the editors:
Morton Kondracke alleges that a recent article of mine is "isolationist," which it is not. It is possible to criticize a democratist ideology of global meddling and still acknowledge the international interests and responsibilities of the United States.

Democratists typically employ simplistic notions of democracy and the world. Enamored of loosely defined "human rights," they also assume that their abstract scheme fits all circumstances. That democracy might not be suited to all countries seems to them an ornery thought. It is indicative of intellectual and historical provincialism that many democratists are now considering whether history is coming to an end in present-day Western democracy. Majoritarian, plebiscitary democracy is destructive not only of American-style constitutional democracy but of civilized life in general.

Sound foreign policy requires moral realism and a sense of limits. To warn against the potentially disastrous international consequences of a meddlesome, utopian moralism and against the danger of evading pressing problems at home does not ipso facto make one an isolationist, or, for that matter, an anti-democrat.

CLAES G. RYN
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:
Morton Kondracke labels me a member of the "realist" school, whose members take "a position that begins merely anti-interventionist but often ends up isolationist." He adds: "The argument is that America, trying to act as an imperial power, has become overextended and needs to pull back and repair its domestic economy." I cannot speak for my fellow "realists," but my own position is not isolationist. In fact, I have argued that we needed to put our domestic economy in order precisely to enhance our alliance systems. I have argued for some troop drawdown in Europe, but coupled this with a call for a highly activist policy in Eastern Europe, the Western Pacific, and the Western Hemisphere. America has to have its resources in line in order to pursue a successful and activist foreign policy. As Kondracke must know, the realist school (no quotes needed) has traditionally included Hans Morgenthau, George Kennan, and Walter Lippmann in its ranks. It was Lippmann who wrote that we should bring into balance, with a comfortable surplus in reserve, a nation's commitments—economic, political, military—and a nation's power. That is the realist position.

JAMES CHACE
New York, New York

Particles of knowledge

To the editors:
Robert Wright fell just short of giving George Gilder's *Microcosm* the drubbing it deserved ("Tao Jones," November 20). Much of Gilder's thesis is based on the fallacy that information technology is a probabilistic phenomena. It is true that the subatomic structure of matter is not deterministic; our physical world thus rests upon a foundation of indeterminacy. But as subatomic and atomic particles collect to form larger structures, the probabilistic nature of the individual particles gives way to the deterministic world with which most of us are familiar. When I drop a tennis ball, I know precisely when and where it will strike the ground. I also know that three pieces of properly doped silicon can be joined to form a transistor that will perform in an entirely deterministic fashion. These transistors can be used to construct a microprocessor, which, in turn, can be used to construct a computer. The development of an information revolution is inextricably entwined with the deterministic side of our material world. Those who would find God, the source of our free will, and good excuses for voting Republican had best look elsewhere; they won't find them in my personal computer.

STEPHEN B. WICKER
Atlanta, Georgia

Domestic content

To the editors:
When I glanced at the Table of Contents of the 75th anniversary issue, I was aghast to see that of the 23 contributors only two were women. Did anyone else make the same observation?

ANN LEVINE
Santa Monica, California

Private lessons

To the editors:
Thanks to "Privates on Parade," (November 13), which stated that private sexual behavior is none of the public's business as long as it doesn't affect one's job, I now realize that to be "recklessly promiscuous" is bad, but to be "quietly adulterous" is perfectly acceptable. I used to think that someone who broke their commitment to their marriage was someone who thought not with their head, but with another part of their anatomy. As such, I thought they were untrustworthy. I wouldn't have voted for Gary Hart for town clerk.

Apparently I needn't consider "quietly adulterous" behavior when I cast my ballot. Never mind that someone who has an affair causes their family pain; if it doesn't affect the job, it's not our business. I used to believe that people who got out of an unhappy marriage, but without having an affair first, were to be admired at least for their honesty. I see now that it's just the same either way. You call for "unsensational reporting of low sex in high places . . . only when it makes a difference." I always thought that "low sex" in any place was wrong.

JAMES HALL
Willimantic, Connecticut

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE NEW REPUBLIC

DECEMBER 18, 1989

PRAGUE SPRUNG

First came Poland, now governed by a prime minister who is not only non-Communist but also, and very precisely, anti-Communist. Then Hungary, where the Communist Party, in the course of renaming itself, seems nearly to have abolished itself: as the Hungarian Socialist Party it has signed up just 30,000 of its former 270,000 members, and the *New York Times*, unsure of just what to call it, now refers to it as "the ruling party"—a designation that will no longer serve after next spring's parliamentary elections. Then East Germany, where walls of every kind have begun to come down. Now—sooner than anyone had expected—the people of Czechoslovakia, in their millions, have joined the massive peaceful revolution that is transforming the center of Europe and the shape of history itself. From the founding of the Civic Forum, Czechoslovakia's umbrella opposition group, to the government's offer of power-sharing and its capitulation on the principle of the "leading role" of the Communist Party took exactly ten days—and this time the world was shaken without coups, without "vanguards," without violence.

This great tidal uprising has concentrated the minds of apparatchiks who a few months ago were faithful and vocal servants of totalitarian dogma and totalitarian reality. Now it's nearly impossible to find one who will admit to having been anything worse than a closet reformer. But if these gray-suited, gray-souled men are suddenly singing a different tune, it is because they have been forced to by the people they can no longer rule with their accustomed arrogance and contempt. For the moment, as an example, someone called Ladislav Adamec is the prime minister of Czechoslovakia. It has been left to him (and a diminishing band of others like him) to parrot the unfamiliar phrases by which the Communist bureaucracy forlornly hopes it can retain some shred of power and privilege. Only last month Adamec was waving away with haughty hand the tribunes of the opposition. To him the dissident playwright Vaclav Havel was no one at all, "an absolute zero." Yet when Adamec tried to speak to the largest crowd of Czechs and Slovaks ever assembled, the moral authority persuading them to listen was not his, not the authority of the official leader, but that of Havel—who had represented them, so to speak, for many months in prison, bravely and without much notice from self-proclaimed friends of freedom in the West. Havel's moral authority and that of Alexander Dubček, the returned ghost from the spring of 1968, are certainly part of what has made this extraordinary popular rising seem so mature, so patient, so genuinely nonviolent.

These characteristics magnify our exhilaration. They are of course not limited to Czechoslovakia. Similar traits show themselves in Hungary and in Poland, and in places where history has not given us warrant to expect them, which is to say in East Germany, in Bulgaria, and in the various republics, so-called, of the Soviet Union itself. Soviet soldiers, it has been reported, are planning a soldiers' trade union, another surprising manifestation of how deep and wide is the resentment against corruption and against the routinization of obligatory brutality.

Given the cascade of events and emotions, it is tempting to see the trajectory of the future follow the logic of the immediate past. And lately no one has gone broke, as it were, betting on ever faster democratic change in the East. The extraordinarily moving and significant events in Central Europe have unfolded under the gaze, with the approval, and sometimes, incredibly, at the prodding of the Soviet government and its president, Mikhail Gorbachev. Not least among the astounding aspects of Gorbachev's policy is the apparent equanimity with which he has accepted the total destruction of the ideological basis of power in what could still be justly called, as recently as a few months ago, the satellite countries.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It remains hard to believe that Gorbachev views all this without vertigo and even dread: the borders of the Soviet Union cannot be impermeable to these ideas. After all, in a somewhat more limited way, hemmed in by various qualifications, the same process of delegitimization that has engulfed Central Europe is under way in Moscow. As the ideological legitimacy of Communist rule in the Soviet Union crumbles, Gorbachev races against time to find new underpinnings for his own government. So far he has gambled on political liberalization, feeling his way toward the creation of quasi-representative institutions such as the revamped Supreme Soviet and abolishing most of the limits on freedom of speech and pen. But he clings to the Party's "leading role" and the lineage of Lenin: there's the rub. As the shortages mount—soap is so scarce that Soviet hospitals are reporting an outbreak of lice among patients—and as the costs and contradictions of economic restructuring loom ever larger, the walls are inexorably closing in on Gorbachev. Soviet citizens, free to speak and listen but not to wash or eat, may begin to feel they are living the punchline of an old American non-joke: No soap, radio.

Yes, the patience of the Soviet masses is legendary; and if the *narod* were willing dumbly to tolerate 30 years of Stalinism in the hope that present sacrifice would yield future prosperity, then it is not unreasonable to suppose they may be willing to give noisy liberty another few years. But a new Soviet opinion poll (new because recent, and new because honest) shows twice as many citizens eager for "a strong hand" than for further market experiments. Russia and Europe overlap, as Gorbachev keeps insisting with his talk of a common home. But the Soviet Union is not Europe. It is haunted by histories and fissures that propel it toward a fate that may be chillingly different.

And in some matters, Gorbachev has made it abundantly clear he is not a reformer at all. His willingness to tolerate the dissolution of the Bloc is not matched by a parallel willingness to tolerate the dissolution of the Union. He remains committed to the integrity of the inner Soviet empire, the last old-fashioned empire yet extant. And although he has had to concede something here and there to the mutinous ingrates of the system, it is hard to imagine him standing by, let alone presiding, while the contagion of national independence spreads to peoples who theory and history had taught us would not be susceptible to its lures.

The choice of nonviolence is not one for only the discontented masses to make. It is also for those in power to choose or reject. Last spring in Tiananmen Square the Chinese Communist Party decided to kill thousands of its own best young before the gathered television cameras of the world. All that has kept Nicolae Ceausescu from doing the same in Romania is the absence of need, at least as of now. We know how close the East German Party came to trying to stop history with firepower in Leipzig. And one reason a last bloodbath did not put an end to the troubles in Prague was the reluctance of some generals to follow the hardliners in the Party. Another reason, apparently, was a timely word from the Soviet ambassador to Milos Jakes, the now departed general secretary of the Czech Party. For that Gorbachev deserves credit. He did not create the forces that now sweep across Eurasia, but although he cannot abolish them he retains the power to delay them, at God knows what cost in blood, and he has chosen not to do so. Inside the Bloc, it grows harder by the day to turn back. But inside the Union, the issue has only begun to be joined.

NOTEBOOK

LEBANON AND ON: It was suggested in these pages last week ("Global Reach" by Martin Peretz) that the election of Rene Moawad to the presidency of Lebanon, far from being a solution to the country's ills, was, on the contrary, just another symptom. Sure enough, the Lebanese disease has again taken its usual course, this time with unusual speed. A bomb detonated by remote control was the instrument by which Moawad was clasped to the bosom of his Creator. It also killed 23 others and wounded 36. The sequel, too, was familiar. Within two days, according to the Beirut correspondent of London's *Independent*, "bulldozers had plowed over the pulverized building where the president's murderers hid their massive bomb. The bulldozers also buried the vital clues that might have helped the Lebanese army find the killers . . . if they had been of a mind to do so. It is clear that there is going to be no investigation . . . no police inquiries among the hundreds of apartment-dwellers who may—and in some cases must—have seen the man or woman who detonated the bomb." This way suspicion can be cast on all, blame fixed on none. At the funeral in Zghorta, wailing mourners vowed revenge on Beirut. And so it goes. Now another Maronite Christian, Elias Hrawi, has been elected by the dregs of the 17-year-old parliament to succeed the instant martyr. Hrawi brings even less credibility to the job than did his predecessor. Born in an area long under the informal dominion of Syria, now not so informal, the president begins his job without even the cachet of clan, in a country where clan matters nearly as much as confessional. He has already challenged Gen. Michel Aoun to step down as commander of the Christian forces, a goal reachable only if Hrawi conspires in his adversary's assassination, or if he hides, as many suspect he will, behind the masked armed forces of Syria. Of course, Hrawi might himself be "taken out," to follow in the footsteps of many Lebanese politicians for whom great claims are made and to whom few real achievements can be credited. But whether he survives as president or not, one truth becomes more evident every day: Lebanon is not a single country. It was once a figment of something close to that in the imaginations of many. It is, however, many years since it has been even that.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FARRACAN'T: At a recent lunch with reporters, Washington resident and non-candidate for Mayor Jesse Jackson was asked what he thought about a D.C. City Council resolution passed in late October praising the Nation of Islam and Louis Farrakhan for their good works fighting drugs in the city. Jackson hedged and hawed and said he didn't want to get into it. But after being pressed he said he "would share that view," i.e., that of the resolution's supporters. Why can't Jackson take an unambiguous stand against the religious and racial prejudice that is an inextricable part of Farrakhan's "message"? It's partly because he doesn't want to alienate a small but increasingly powerful black constituency, but there's more to it than that. Jackson is plainly willing to remain silent in the face of bigotry if that's the only way he can avoid seeming to agree with Farrakhan's critics. Jackson may or may not be pro-Farrakhan. He is, however, quite firmly anti-anti-Farrakhan.

STREET OF SHAME: You might think other city councils would learn something from Washington's mistake. Instead, 15 aldermen in Chicago are pushing a proposal to rename Stony Island Avenue on the city's South Side Elijah Muhammed Drive. Followers of Muhammed, who died in 1975, distinguish themselves from Farrakhan's adherents. But their message too is a racist, separatist one: the white race is an enemy to black mankind, blacks don't belong in America, and so on. Muhammed, who called Martin Luther King Jr. an enemy of his people, is widely believed to be responsible for the killing of Malcolm X. Another good reason not to name a street after him.

FUN DOWN UNDER:

—Johannesburg *Star*, October 27

THEN AGAIN, MAYBE I WON'T:

Swapo Chief Vows to Allow Democracy

—*New York Times*, November 16

Namibian leader declines to rule out one-party state

—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, same day
(thanks to Franklin Green, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

LUCKY GEORGE

By Fred Barnes

John Sununu, the White House chief of staff, chain-dialed Republicans on Capitol Hill when Congress adjourned just before Thanksgiving. One of the first he reached, on November 21 at 11 p.m., was Newt Gingrich, the House GOP whip. "Sununu was chortling," says Gingrich. He was ecstatic about President Bush's record in Congress. Can you believe how well all this has worked out? Sununu asked. Gingrich was a believer. He said Bush's achievements were the most impressive by the White House since 1981, when President Reagan pushed through his epochal tax and budget cuts. Sununu went back to dialing. "I called [Representatives] Bob Michel and Jerry Lewis and [Senators] Bob Dole and Alan Simpson," he said, "and thanked them for what was a productive session."

But Sununu is in the minority. The conventional wisdom on Bush and Congress was captured by the *Washington Post* in the headline on its adjournment story: "LITTLE ACHIEVED AS 101ST CONGRESS ENDS FIRST SESSION." The way reporters score things, quantity matters. If Congress enacts a humongous body of legislation, that means much has been achieved, regardless of whether what passed was needed or worthwhile. If Congress approves relatively few bills, as it did this year, that means little has been achieved. For a new President there's an additional test. Did he overpower Congress and gain approval of the major proposals he advocated in the campaign? In Bush's case, the answer is yes and no. But the proposal that failed—cutting the tax rate on capital gains—monopolized the attention of the press. So Sununu, in touting Bush's record, sounds like he's blowing smoke.

He isn't. I think Bush did remarkably well, given his role in the scheme of things. He's not an instigator. He's a consolidator. Reagan staged what there was of a conservative revolution. Bush simply wants to preserve Reagan's gains. In domestic policy Reagan's paramount achievement was tax rate reduction. Bush, against the odds, preserved that in 1989. He managed to get a budget through Congress without a tax increase. Reagan barred foreign aid funds from being applied to family planning programs that include abortion as an option (or in China, as a requirement). Bush kept the faith on this by using the veto. These aren't eye-popping victories. But for Bush, who never had much of an agenda, they'll do.

On practically every issue, including capital gains, Bush has made more headway than expected (at least by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

me). His capital gains cut was supposedly dead on arrival. But it mustered a majority in the House Ways and Means Committee, was overwhelmingly approved on the House floor, and got 51 votes in the Senate. Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell had to pull rank on Democrats and resort to a filibuster to block passage. This was clever, and it annoyed the White House no end. It even caused friction between the White House and Republican Senators, who decided to give up on capital gains for the year before Bush and Sununu were ready. But victory-by-filibuster hardly signifies resurgent Democratic leadership.

What makes Bush's success seem so small is his tepid, sometimes nonexistent leadership in dealing with Congress. On top of that, his biggest achievements in 1989 were negative. "There are things that didn't pass that I consider progress," says Sununu. "We didn't get a bad child care bill." The White House, however, had practically no role in bottling up the bill after it cleared both the House and Senate. It was sidetracked by a dispute among Democrats over whether tax credits for working families who need day care for their kids should be part of the legislation. True, Bush might have vetoed a bill without tax credits (he favors tax credits). But that veto might have been overridden.

Bush's part in the repeal of two measures that Reagan, in his weakened post-Iranamok days, had signed was all the more passive. I think Bush felt repeal wasn't remotely possible. At one time or another, the Bush White House halfheartedly tried to preserve both. Budget director Richard Darman was willing to arrange a deal to keep Section 89 of the tax reform act of 1986. It compels employers to offer roughly the same fringe benefits to lower-level employees as it does to top executives. House Republicans lobbied the White House to drop the idea. Bush did. "We just stepped out of the way," a White House official said. And Section 89 was repealed. The same drill occurred in the case of catastrophic health insurance. Bush, pressured by Republicans, abandoned his support and announced he'd go along with anything from outright repeal to partial retention of the program. It was repealed.

The White House, says Gingrich, showed "a level of flexibility you don't associate with any Presidents since FDR." In other words, Bush didn't lead. He followed. Significant things resulted, but they weren't Bush's doing. The repeal of catastrophic health insurance was "one of the most interesting things that happened in this Congress," said Darman on CNN's "Evans & Novak." It is "the only case in the modern history of televised democracies where a broad-based entitlement program has been repealed. It suggests we may be at the end of the line in terms of just wanton expansion of such programs." Well, maybe we are, but no thanks to Bush. He was merely lucky.

On two fronts, Bush was bold—bolder than Reagan, anyway. He was willing to veto even popular bills, and he let across-the-board budget cuts go into effect. Aides to Reagan talked incessantly about pursuing a veto strategy, but one never materialized in eight years. Bush wielded the veto, and the veto threat, purposefully. Last winter he objected to a measure for stiffening the reporting requirements of foreign investors in this country. Bush called then House Speaker Jim Wright and said he couldn't live with the bill. He'd have to veto it. Neither Wright nor his successor, Tom Foley, brought the bill up. Bush used the veto nine times, and none was overridden. "In a Congress with the numbers we're facing [the Senate is 55-45 Democratic; the House, 258-176], that's an accomplishment in itself," says White House lobbyist Gary Andres.

Bush danced away nimbly from a possible override on minimum wage. He won the first veto of minimum wage, and he stuck to his position that the wage floor should rise to no more than $4.25 and include a subminimum training wage. When the White House heard that Republican support was eroding in November, Bush rushed to compromise. He settled for $4.25 over two years (instead of three) and a training wage limited to teenagers. This wasn't bad from Bush's standpoint.

Imposing the across-the-board cuts, or sequester, was the most important thing Bush did. All year Democrats in Congress had doubted that he would apply the meat ax approach. They were wrong. Bush finally reached an accord with Democrats, but he insisted on keeping four months of across-the-board cuts. Their value is they're real cuts, not gimmicks or paper savings. "The Congress, I hope, has learned that it's dealing with an Administration that is prepared to take sequester," said Darman. He loved the sequester because it lowered the base line for the 1991 budget, making it easier to trim the deficit to $64 billion, as required by Gramm-Rudman.

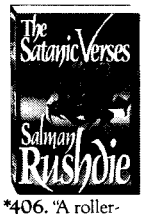
The sequester isn't "a paper tiger" anymore, says Sununu. "It strengthens the President's hand for what is going to be a tougher time next year." Strengthens his hand for what? Gingrich says Bush is poised to unleash a far-reaching reform package ("challenge the fundamentals of the structure of government") in 1990. Either that or muddle along unimaginatively like President Eisenhower. I think Gingrich misunderstands Bush's intentions. Bush doesn't need a sweeping reform agenda to submit to voters in 1990 and 1992. Clean air legislation reasonably close to Bush's model is likely to pass in 1990. He'll have arms reductions to brag about. Through 1990 at any rate, Bush expects to be able to boast of having kept his pledge of no new taxes. "Tax increases are off the table for next year," says a Bush aide. "No one even mentions the subject anymore."

To celebrate his good fortune in Congress in 1989, Bush made a rare appearance at the White House senior staff meeting on November 22. He showed up shortly before 8 a.m. and was in a joshing mood. Bush ribbed counsel Boyden Gray. He twitted Sununu about his sorrow at seeing his beloved friends in Congress depart Washington. (By adjournment, relations between Sununu and Congressional Republicans had frayed.) Bush said he was "pleased" by his record in Congress. Having achieved more than he sought, he ought to be. •

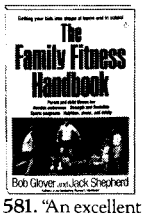
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

3 BOOKS, 3 BUCKS. NO COMMITMENT. NO KIDDING.

***716.** From the pages of *Rolling Stone*, a documentary of the past 20 years.
Hardcover: $24.95
QPB: $12.95

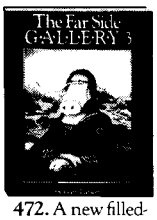


***406.** "A roller-coaster ride over a vast landscape of the imagination." —*London Guardian*
Hardcover: $19.95
QPB: $9.95

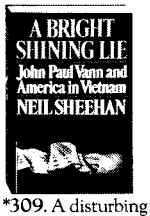


581. "An excellent reference on health and fitness aimed toward the entire family"—*Kirkus Reviews.*
QPB: $8.95

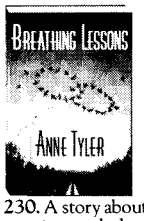
182. Moyers talks about everything from morality to science with notable individuals.
Hardcover: $29.95
QPB: $15.95



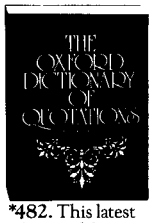
472. A new filled-to-bursting collection of over 500 hysterical "Far Side" cartoons.
QPB: $8.95



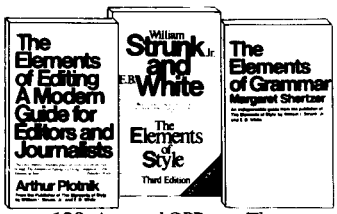
***309.** A disturbing biography of an army officer who personified America's presence in Vietnam.
Hardcover: $24.95
QPB: $12.95



230. A story about marriage and what it means to spend a lifetime with another person.
Hardcover: $18.95
QPB: $9.95

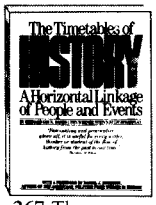


***482.** This latest edition of the famous dictionary has 40,000 memorable quotations.
Hardcover: $45
QPB: $18.95



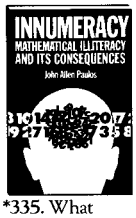
109. A special QPB trio: *The Elements of Style, The Elements of Grammar* and *The Elements of Editing.*
3-volume set
QPB: $10.95

467. The critically acclaimed, best-selling history of the Civil War.
Hardcover: $35
QPB: $14.95



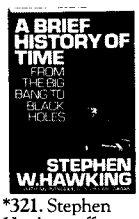
267. The story of civilization in a unique chart format.
Hardcover: $29.95
QPB: $15.95

***165.** The story of an artist who must confront the troubling memories of her childhood.
Hardcover: $18.95
QPB: $9.50



***335.** What happens when well-educated people are ignorant of basic mathematics.
Hardcover: $16.95
QPB: $8.95

424. An irresistible catalog of anecdote, scientific fact and high drama about demise.
Hardcover: $19.95
QPB: $9.95



***321.** Stephen Hawking offers a convincing big picture of the origins of the cosmos.
Hardcover: $18.95
QPB: $9.50

360. Treat yourself to the antics of a six-year-old and his stuffed-tiger alter ego.
QPB: $10.95

***793.** A definitive one-volume collection including seven previously unpublished tales.
Hardcover: $22.50
QPB: $10.95

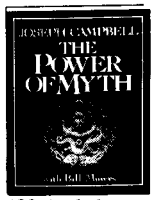
***132.** The conclusion to the trilogy that began with *Rebel Angels* and continued with *What's Bred in the Bone.*
Hardcover: $19.95
QPB: $9.95

297. Soothing therapeutic techniques. 150 graphic photographs.
QPB: $9.50

473. Here's Volume 2 of a landmark study of European women from the Renaissance to the present.
Hardcover: $27.50
QPB: $10.95

243. Three novels of modern Egypt by the winner of the 1988 Nobel Prize in literature.
(3-in-1 vol.)
QPB: $12.95

***330.** An award-winning food writer offers more than 600 recipes for your microwave oven.
Hardcover: $19.95
QPB: $9.95



423. A scholar on mythology tells how myths have shaped our lives. A PBS television series.
Hardcover: $27.50
QPB: $15.95

***QPB Exclusive: The only softcover edition now available.**

How QPB Membership Works:

Big savings: QPB books are softcover books in hardcover sizes, durably bound and printed on fine paper. But they are priced up to 60% less than their hardcover counterparts.

QPB Review: You'll receive the *QPB Review* 15 times a year (about every 3½ weeks). Each issue reviews a new Selection, plus scores of other books. If you want the Selection do nothing. It will be shipped to you automatically. If you want one or more of the other books—or no book at all—indicate your decision on the Reply Form always enclosed and return it by the date specified. A shipping and handling charge is added to each shipment.

Return privilege: If the *QPB Review* is delayed and you receive the Selection without having had 10 days to notify us, you may return it for credit.

Bonus books for Bonus Points: For each softcover book or set you take (except for the books in this offer), you earn Bonus Points which entitle you to choose any of our softcover books. You pay only shipping and handling charges.

Cancellations: You may cancel membership at any time by notifying QPB. We may cancel your membership if you elect not to buy at least one book in any six-month period.

Let's try each other for 6 months.

Quality Paperback Book Club,® P.O. Box 8804, Camp Hill, PA 17011-8804.

Please enroll me in QPB and send the 3 choices I've listed below, billing me only $1 each, plus shipping and handling charges. I understand that I am not required to buy another book. You will send me the *QPB Review* (if my account is in good standing) for at least six months. If I have not bought at least one book in any six-month period, you may cancel my membership.

Indicate by number your 3 choices: ☐ ☐ ☐

Name _____ 9-16
(Please print clearly.) QB127-12-1

Address _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Prices are generally higher in Canada. © 1989 Quality Paperback Book Club. All orders subject to approval.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CANCER WARP

By Robert Bazell

As a pre-holiday press release the American Council on Science and Health sent reporters an embossed menu detailing a typical Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner: turkey, sweet potatoes, pumpkin pie—the works. The ACSH is a public interest group set up and paid for by people who tend to share the chemical industry's views. Under each item the ACSH listed the so-called naturally occurring carcinogens that appear in trace amounts in these foods—chemicals such as heterocyclic amines in turkey and ethyl carbamate in bread stuffing. These are not substances like asbestos that inarguably cause cancer in people. They are chemicals that researchers have shown can damage the genetic material of bacteria (a test indicating something might cause cancer) or induce tumors when given in large doses to rodents. It is those types of tests that provoke environmental groups to demand that certain pesticides be banned. The point, of course, is that people should no more worry about the trace amounts of carcinogens from pesticides than they should the tiny quantities of carcinogens in their foods.

But people are right to be alarmed about the environmental causes of cancer, whatever their source. More than a million Americans will learn they have cancer this year, and half a million will die from it. From 1950 to 1986 (the last year for which good data are available) the incidence of cancer in the United States climbed 36.6 percent. Lung cancer, most of it resulting from cigarette smoking, caused the biggest carnage. Its incidence rose 209 percent in men and 451 percent in women. But even excluding lung cancer, the cancer rate rose 22.6 percent.

One reason is that people are living longer, escaping other illness. But that's only part of the story. The incidence of cancer in children 14 and younger increased 21.5 percent in that period, and other evidence reveals increases in cancer that have nothing to do with aging. The Government collects cancer rates that are adjusted to account for increases caused by an aging population. These reveal actual changes in the rate of the disease that are startling. Between 1974 and 1986 the age-adjusted rates of these cancers increased: breast cancer up 18.4 percent; brain, 22.3 percent; bladder, 10.3 percent; liver, 16.2 percent; thyroid, 16.7 percent; colon, 13.9 percent. The list goes on. Yet during that same time the incidence of some cancers dropped. Stomach cancer was down 20 percent; cervical cancer, 36.1 percent; Hodgkin's disease, 16 percent. Scientists say these numbers reveal that there are indeed powerful environmental causes of cancer.

What are they? In most cases scientists can only guess, and some cite that lack of knowledge as the profound deficit in America's efforts to cope with cancer. Research into the causes of cancer and thus our ability to prevent it is 40 years behind research into treatments, says Dr. John Bailar of McGill University, a bio-statistician who is a former employee and a frequent critic of the National Cancer Institute.

Discovering the causes of cancer is no simple matter. The word describes many diseases, each of which may have different or multiple causes. Environment encompasses more than chemicals sprayed on food or fouling drinking water. Everything our bodies encounter, from viruses and radiation to the air we breathe and the natural fat and fiber in the foods we eat, is a potential cause of cancer. The most popular theory for the decline of stomach cancer (down 73.1 percent from 1950) is refrigeration. Our foods no longer contain the quantities of preservatives, many of them known to cause cancer, that were once necessary. The best guess for the increase of breast cancer is that American women have been consuming more fat in their diet. Studies of women in different cultures suggest that fat intake correlates with the risk of breast cancer, but there is also the nagging suspicion that birth control pills or something else might play a role as well. Speculation about why more children are getting cancer and other changes in incidence are often even less informed.

Almost 19 years have passed since the federal Government officially declared war on cancer, sharply increasing the money available to the National Cancer Institute. A group of wealthy philanthropists with an interest in health policy, headed by New York socialite Mary Lasker, conceived the cancer war and persuaded Congress and the Nixon Administration to wage it. From the start, those who helped create the war molded it to their specification. The primary drive was not prevention but an attempt to find a cure as quickly as possible. The political rhetoric from that time reflects those sentiments. After signing the act in 1971, President Nixon promised that the United States would apply the same kind of concerted effort toward conquering this dread disease that split the atom and took man to the Moon. One supporter of the Cancer Act, Representative John J. Rooney of Brooklyn, offered a resolution in the House declaring that cancer should be cured by 1976. "I firmly believe there is no more fitting way to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the independence of our country," he said.

Few if any scientists shared Rooney's sense of the historical moment or Nixon's notion of cancer as an engineering challenge akin to the Manhattan or Apollo projects. But scientists were willing to accept the money for research, and many now say that much of it was wasted in the early years because there was more cash than there were good ideas. Eventually the cancer pro-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gram began to support (and still does) an enormous body of profoundly important basic research that will help treat cancer and other diseases. But it takes years for results to travel from the test tube to the patient's bedside—and until it does, prevention offers the best opportunity for cutting cancer deaths. For years the Cancer Institute showed little interest in prevention. "You have to look at the times," says Dr. Vincent DaVita, who worked for the National Cancer Institute for 20 years and directed it from 1980 to 1988. Prevention at that point was a very strange subject.

Having enlisted in the war, the scientists faced another dilemma. The leaders of the Cancer Institute were required to appear regularly before Congress to justify the continued funding. Their common refrain has been that though a cure remains elusive, improving treatments are saving people's lives. The statistics reveal that to be true for many types of cancers but not for others. The biggest success has been the ability to treat and often cure childhood cancers. Although the incidence has increased 21.5 percent since 1950, the death rate dropped 60.3 percent. Similar trends for other cancers indicate that treatments are improving. But for yet other cancers (including lung and kidney) the age-adjusted death rate is going up along with the incidence, revealing that treatments are not accomplishing much. The overall age-adjusted death rate for all types of cancer continues to climb.

Even the cancer program's severest critics say that the past few years have brought some change, including more attention to causes. But prevention studies still receive a tiny portion of the budget compared with the search for better treatments. Two years ago the Cancer Institute rejected as too expensive a study of 30,000 women to try to learn the role of dietary fat in breast cancer. (This year it did fund a smaller study that the researchers hope to expand.) Thus those attempting to study the causes of cancer face a difficult task, and they seldom achieve the glory that accompanies a major finding in basic research. But it is crucial not to underestimate the potential for saving lives. Dr. John Cairns of the Harvard School of Public Health points out that the death rates from malaria, cholera, typhus, tuberculosis, scurvy, pellagra, and other scourges of the past have dwindled in the United States mainly because humankind has learned to prevent these diseases, not simply because they can be treated. The approach to cancer should be no different.

And what about those heterocyclic amines in your turkey and ethyl carbamate in the stuffing? Dr. Devra Lee Davis, a scholar in residence at the National Academy of Sciences, has studied the question of naturally occurring carcinogens. She concludes they probably don't present any threat because humans have been eating these foods for thousands of years, and if there is a danger we have evolved a way to resist it. As for pesticides, Davis says: "It is not that they are responsible for all cancer, or even much of it. They may play a very small role, but they play

SPECIAL OFFER: **LE CALENDRIER MONDIAL • DER WELTKALENDER • EL ALMANAQUE MUNDIAL • 世界 • التقويم العالمي**

Includes:

- **Holidays of the world's five major religions – Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hindu, Buddhist – in six languages.**
- **National and bank holidays of a hundred nations.**
- **Each weekday and month in six languages.**
- **Each photo caption in six languages.**
- **An International Time Zone Map.**
- **English radio broadcast frequencies throughout the world.**
- **And an index to help you find and understand celebration days throughout the globe.**

This handsome calendar is lavishly illustrated with old photos and engravings which reflect the world's diversity of cultural tradition. Each month brings a new theme based on an important cultural or religious motif. The World Calendar is truly the first international calendar. Printed in six languages – English, French, German, Spanish, Japanese, and Arabic – this large (11"x14") calendar will be an attractive addition to any room – whether at home or the office. And it will enrich each day with the wealth of international experience. Perfect for those with international business or interests.

"Our subscribers have found The World Calendar to be an excellent resource for international business and travel."
Bill Bonner, Publisher, International Living

World Calendar-NR • c/o Educational Extension Systems • P.O. Box 259 • Clarks Summit, PA 18411 • Toll Free 1-800-447-8561

☐ Please send me (1) calendar at $9.95 plus $2.50 postage ($12.45)
For (2) or more calendars, please send_____ calendars at $9.95 each plus $2.00 postage ($11.95 each)
☐ Check or Purchase Order enclosed. **Phone Orders 1-800-447-8561**
☐ Charge my credit card ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard
Card No. _____ Exp. Date _____

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State ____ Zip _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a role which could be prevented, and that is very attractive to public health people. If pesticides have been blamed too much for cancer, the fault must lie not just with parents concerned about their children's futures, a fear-mongering press, or overzealous environmentalists. Much of the onus must go to a federal cancer research establishment that for years paid too little attention to searching for the true causes of cancer."

ROBERT BAZELL is the science correspondent for NBC News.

In Berlin, the 'Ossies' go West.

SEEING IS BELIEVING

By Christopher Hope

BERLIN

You know that things are serious when the TV news stations start flying in their anchor men and women. Chattering groups of them thronged Berlin Airport when I arrived on November 12, father figures and mother confessors from the news desks of the American networks, the British Broadcasting Corp., Japanese TV, and the European pop and sports satellite channels. They were eager to present the news in situ, beside the Berlin Wall, in front of the Brandenburg Gate. They were attended by baggage bearers, drones, and soldiers who formed a kind of protective scrimmage, easing their costly charges through passport control, incredulous that mere officials should obstruct the faces welcomed into millions of homes each night.

Berliners have always displayed disrespect when faced with power or privilege. And household names become very parochial the moment they leave the house. The famous faces, it must be said, are paler than expected, the eyes flutter restlessly as if searching for makeup and the auto-cue. As the Berliners well knew, these were people who a few weeks ago could not have picked out their divided city on a map. Berlin flickered in the memory, if at all, mixed with images of Liza Minnelli belting out her stuff in *Cabaret*. Indeed, for most people Berlin was an improbable oasis in the East German wilderness, cut in two by the Wall, surrounded by Russian troops, a stump of a city crowded with allied soldiers, spiked with missiles, lined with steak houses.

Berlin was last in the news in a big way during the Berlin airlift, and the building of the Wall in 1961. It featured vividly when President Kennedy gazed out across the Wall and proclaimed: "I am a Berliner." But thereafter it was simply a schizophrenic city. A remnant of a vanished metropolis, occupied by its conquerors—in the West a prosperous fortress of two million people; in the East a prison house its masters called paradise, a place of outer darkness. Berlin was not a place—it was an issue. It never quite seemed to be part of modern Germany. When people thought of West Germany they tended to think of Bonn, the apologetic federal capital, of Mercedes and BMW, and of the strength of the deutsche mark. It was devoutly to be hoped that the two Germanys would one day be reunited, but outside the circles of the devout, no one was putting any money on it.

Since the erection of the Wall 28 years ago, Berlin has become a kind of distant theater of the cold war. A fine place for spy stories, the scene of memorable exchanges of secret agents; daring escapes by hugely brave men and women hidden in the cunning compartments of trucks and automobiles; flights by hot air balloon; midnight dashes through the sewers beneath the city. And of abortive escapes that ended in gunfire and bleeding bodies. Along the length of the Wall small tabernacles remember with a name or a photograph those who did not get away.

Then suddenly the world was stood on its head. The night of Friday, November 10, the East Germans began smashing through the Wall. By November 14 there were 22 new crossing points, with promises of more to come. And through these gaps poured the grateful tens of thousands. The invasion so long predicted was coming true. Even the direction was right—the invaders came from the East. But they carried not rifles but shopping bags, and they arrived not in tanks but on foot, or in tiny two-stroke motorcars called Trabants, belching fumes, their fiberglass frames shivering on their uncertain chassis. To watch the tiny Trabant cross the Wall and go chugging along the broad West Berlin boulevards, impatiently followed by a gas-guzzling, absurdly fast turbo triumph of German automotive engineering, is to be present at a motorized street theater. The way into the future might be summed up by a single stage direction: "Exit a Trabant, pursued by a Porsche."

West Berliners, usually so laconic, acerbic, irreverent, melted in the face of this invasion. The Opera House offered free performances of Mozart's *Magic Flute*. The city fathers allowed free travel on the subway, the U-Bahn. They gave each new arrival 100 marks to spend. The department stores hung out welcome signs and exchanged the visitors' dud currency at the rate of ten East German marks for one West German mark. Around the square at the top of the Kurfürstendamm, beside the ruins of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church commemorating the destruction of Berlin, sausage stalls appeared, trestle tables, beakers of beer, mobile toilets, street musicians, and unbounded conviviality. The visitors were quickly dubbed the "*Ossies*" to distinguish them from the West Berliners, who became, naturally, the "*Wessies*." When *Ossies* met *Wessies*, there took place in West Berlin the biggest damn family reunion Europe has seen since the War.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

True, there were also a few party poopers about. Taxi drivers worried aloud about the cost of it all. After all, there were at least 1.2 million East Berliners (or had been the last time anyone had been brave enough or foolhardy enough to count them), and at 100 marks a head, the overall subsidy for this invasion, in every sense, was not small beer. Similarly, guest workers employed to do the work that West Berliners disdain took a rather dim view. "What will happen to me?" the Turkish cleaning attendant of a block of flats asked her employer, "when the *Ossies* undercut me?" Her employer appeared happily unconcerned. "I know. I've had three offers already."

And what of the thousands of troops that the Western allies and the Russians have kept massed along this crucial border? More worrying still, to the Poles and others—with sad memories of the last united Germany—where were the borders of Germany itself? Why had the West German chancellor, on a visit to Poland, declined to state that the postwar boundaries were immovable? And what on earth was one to make of a German people who, it seemed, were no longer preparing for the war but mounting shopping expeditions instead?

It was all very confusing and very euphoric and vaguely troubling all at once. Anyone who imagined that things would settle down did not, as they say in Berlin, have all his cups in the cupboard. Such people also mistook the significance of symbols. A Wall had once stood between East and West, built of stone and stained with blood. One night, without warning, it fell down. And only the rich bird life, thriving along its empty, eerie length, would mourn its passing. No one was surprised by the news that three Communist mayors from the East had committed suicide. It was the opinion of otherwise pacific matrons taking coffee in the Kempinski Eck, the famous plush, glass-fronted observatory on the Kurfürstendamm, that the disgraced former leader of East Germany, Erich Honecker, should "do the decent thing" and follow suit.

West Berliners have always detested the Wall, but they learned to live with it. They have jogged along its length and have daubed it with graffiti from end to end, but except on rare occasions when it thrust itself into view with a spectacular escape, or some important politician came to call and made a speech, they forgot about it. What West Berlin has never allowed anybody to forget is the War itself. Bullet holes are still to be seen, spattering the sides of buildings. Fragments of the portals of the old Berlin synagogue are cemented into the porch of the Jewish Community Center in Fasanenstrasse. West Berlin is a city loud with ghosts.

The area around the Wall added to the sense of war-torn desolation. Once it was the site of the Potsdamer Platz, among the busiest intersections in Europe, the very heart of Berlin. Since the War ended it has been a muddy, disconsolate slum. Taxi drivers assured visitors with laconic understatement that it was not "a development area." The deserted embassies look like the victims of some below-stairs revolt by the lower vegetable orders. Creepers spread across their facades and reach through open windows into empty rooms.

Reminders of the cataclysm are everywhere: the Hitler bunker; the site of the Gestapo torture chambers in Wilhelmstrasse; the fragmentary remains of the old Anhalter station, a crumbling facade and a few headless statues on a roof out of which trees have sprouted. Before the War the Anhalter dispatched 60 trains a day to Dresden, Rome, Vienna. Nearby is Friedrichstrasse, now a gray shadow of its pre-war, tinselly self. It sputters out in a pizzeria and a rash of bars, ending abruptly when it runs up against Checkpoint Charlie. The graffiti on the Wall reveals the genial derision in which West Berliners hold the foreigner's tender fascination with this monstrous monument: "What are you staring at? Have you never seen a wall before?"

There has always been something inconsolably sad in the air of West Berlin. East Berlin, by contrast, has always pretended otherwise. East Berliners never spoke of their city as "East Berlin," but always and only as Berlin, the capital of the only legitimate Germany. They preferred to ignore the existence of the imposter stuck away in the middle of 110 miles of East German territory. East German soldiers were to be seen regularly changing the guard Unter Den Linden, still doing the goose step, wearing helmets like soup plates.

Naturally I crossed the Wall into the East for the simple pleasure of witnessing East Germans moving the other way. They waited patiently in long lines, helped by the border guards to fill in their travel forms. It must be strange to ask directions from a man who a week earlier would have shot you for trying to leave the country. It must have been even stranger for the guards themselves trained to snarl, shoot, and inspect the undersides of tourist buses with giant dentist mirrors. Overnight they had become part of the courtesy staff, obliging, efficient, seemingly delighted that most of the population planned a trip abroad.

I traveled to the East with a British novelist who had never made the crossing before. She had a theory that you could tell you were getting older when the popes started looking younger. But in Berlin, that test seemed really to apply to border guards. They appeared to have shed years overnight. "Please step this way to exchange your money," a smiling fellow invited toothily, holding the door. Only those used to making this dreary crossing would understand the novelty of his demeanor. I exchanged good West German marks for bad, an obligatory transfer, a tax on curiosity. One day East German banknotes will, like the Wall itself, become collectors' items. On the face of the 20 mark note Goethe stares back guiltily, as if disturbed to find himself so framed.

There has never been much to see in the streets of East Berlin, or in the shops. A smart new coffeehouse adorns the corner of Friedrichstrasse, in its continuation on the other side of the Wall. It is always packed to capacity. Most of the customers appear to have taken up

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

their seats soon after the building was completed and show no signs of leaving. In a nearby supermarket, food is more plentiful than it is, say, in Moscow. But a German economy, *any* German economy, must be in deep trouble if it cannot make even bottles of sauerkraut look attractive. But what lightens everything in a lovely, astonishing fashion are the chattering crowds of East Berliners at the crossing points, waiting to leave as if it were the most natural thing in the world. Most are going for the day, complete with bags, babies, and beaming smiles, heading for the bright lights of West Berlin.

And for citizens of a regime known for its prim moralizing, its political piety, and its claims to be untainted by the lures of Western junk, the *Ossies* show themselves to be endearingly human. They crowd the non-stop strip shows on Kant Strasse. The unexpected connection between vice and philosophy is a feature of West Berlin. After all, the crown (if that is the word) of Martin Luther Strasse happens to be an emporium known as Big Sexy Land. The clip joints reduced their entry fee and offered two free beers to our "Eastern guests" and reported that the crowds were "good-humored."

And so they were. They were also "different," a word that kept cropping up among West Berliners who observed the visitors closely. The *Ossies* manifest that special sort of raging docility that distinguishes Eastern European crowds, people accustomed to standing in line and monitoring their expectations every wish of the way. The *Wessies* looked upon the *Ossies* with a benign complexity attended by gentle satisfaction. They were, quite simply, as pleased as punch to see them in West Berlin—though not quite sure what to do with them.

And thus it was with a certain relief that the *Wessies* sought refuge in their bars, restaurants, and watering holes where the *Ossies* could not follow and sat talking excitedly over meals that only they could afford. And the *Ossies* would press their noses to the windows of the Paris Bar like gentle ghosts. Yet there was no discernible resentment in their stares. *Ossies* were to be seen striding through the most distant suburbs, stopping to stare at children playing in the park, or a man washing his car, or gathering in great crowds outside the windows of the BMW showrooms. After all, what qualitative difference is there among the objects of your fascination when you are seeing it all for the first time? It is all very natural, and not a little sad.

At the entrance to a large department store I watched a family of East Berliners, freshly arrived, wide-eyed and eerily silent. Father, mother, and a boy of about six were passing the chocolate counter. Suddenly the little boy stopped dead. He had seen the chocolates, homemade and gleaming darkly under the lights, perfection behind the glass, a costly pyramid, profligate, tempting, untouchable. His adoration passed like an electric current into his mother and father and rooted them to the spot. No one spoke. After a while, like sleepers awakening, they shook themselves and went on their way. Seeing is believing. It's not the same as having, but it will do, for a while at least.

CHRISTOPHER HOPE is a novelist based in London.

Is there mettle behind Bob Kerrey's medal?

SENATOR PERFECT

By Jacob Weisberg

When Bob Kerrey was Governor of Nebraska, he used to visit a class on Vietnam at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Walter Capps, a native of Nebraska, organizes the course around guest appearances by veterans. He says Kerrey never expressed his own views, or told the story of how he lost a leg and won the Medal of Honor during the war. But once, after Kerrey delivered what Capps calls a "professorial" lecture, a student chided him for not sharing his feelings (it being California). "We have a joke that when Nebraskans don't know what to say they look at their shoes," Capps says. "Bob looked down at his shoes." Then he started singing.

The song, which has become Kerrey's theme, was "And the Band Played Waltzing Mathilda," an Australian ballad about a veteran who returns home from WWI after having his legs blown off. Kerrey sang all the verses, including the one that goes:

> Then a big Turkey shell knocked me ass over head
> And when I awoke in my hospital bed
> I saw what it had done
> And I wished I were dead.
> Never knew there were worse things than dyin'.
> No more waltzing Mathilda for me.

"It answered the question," Capps says. "There was a stunned silence for about ten seconds. Then

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

people began to applaud. They were crying all over the place."

Kerrey sang "Waltzing Mathilda" in public only one other time, at the victory celebration when he was elected to the Senate in November 1988. Kerrey hasn't got much of a voice, but when he dedicated the number to five of his buddies from the Navy SEAL team who came to Nebraska for the celebration, and sang the whole ballad, a crowd of 3,000 was dissolved in tears. The local television correspondent was so choked up that she could hardly finish describing the scene for viewers.

A videotape of the performance has been making the rounds of Democratic fund-raisers, who are keeping a close eye on Kerrey these days. "People passing around tapes—that's how the Ayatollah came to power in Iran," says New York Democratic activist Mark Green, a Kerrey fan. It's probably overreaching to say Kerrey has the late mullah's mesmeric power. But since he took office in January, the 46-year-old junior Senator has shown, along with a certain intellectual underdevelopment, a natural ability to speak from the heart, and to move people with his passion.

Part of what's unusual about Kerrey is that he reveals himself grappling with problems and not just emerging with conclusions. During the flag-burning fight this summer, he went through a public conversion. He was at first adamantly opposed to the Supreme Court's decision in *Texas* v. *Johnson*, which affirmed the First Amendment right to express an opinion by burning a flag, and joined his colleagues in condemning the decision 97-3 in June. He didn't feel strongly about flag desecration; he was just going with the flow. But after reading the opinions in the case over the summer recess, Kerrey redirected his outrage at Chief Justice William Rehnquist's dissent. He savaged it for "a sentimental nationalism which imposes a functional litmus test of loyalty before expression is permitted." Kerrey found a connection to his own experience in Vietnam. "Chief Justice Rehnquist, in his disappointing dissent, asserts that men and women fought for our flag in Vietnam," Kerrey said. "In my case I do not remember feeling this way." By fall, when Congress was still embroiled in debate over a proposed constitutional amendment and a statute that would ban flag desecration, he was fed up with the whole issue. "Where does it lead?" he asked an audience at an appearance in Nebraska. "When you're all done arguing, what have you got? Have you built a house? Have you helped somebody? Have you created a better world? . . . It seems to me there's nothing produced from it and you've divided the nation."

It has been said that Kerrey's record as a war hero insulates him from the kinds of aspersions about his patriotism that damaged Michael Dukakis in the 1988 campaign. But his was still a risky stand: the amendment and the statutory ban were overwhelmingly popular in Nebraska. Other Democratic Vietnam vets in the Senate, Chuck Robb of Virginia and John Kerry of Massachusetts, didn't take any chances with the issue until Kerrey had already opposed both the statute and the amendment. Though the Senate passed the statute, it followed Kerrey's lead by failing to give the amendment the two-thirds vote needed for passage. Months later, even superconservative John C. Danforth of Missouri made a Kerrey-like speech about his own change of heart on the amendment.

Kerrey has used his position as a vet to go where others prefer not to, while resisting opportunities for moral posturing based on his record. When Vice President Quayle was criticized during the campaign for using his family's influence to join the National Guard, others blustered about his shirking. Kerrey, however, sympathized: "I joined the Navy because it was less likely that I'd go to Vietnam," he said. "We did all kinds of things to avoid the draft. There weren't many people who wanted to go to Vietnam. I mean, it was a real short list of people. . . . It's not as if it's a terrible thing that, perhaps sometime in his youth, he did something that was hypocritical." As a trained pharmacist Kerrey could have played it even safer himself by joining up as a commissioned medical officer. Instead he volunteered for the SEALs.

The story of what happened to Kerrey in Vietnam in some ways is reminiscent of the John F. Kennedy PT-109 legend. The crucial difference is that Kerrey came to oppose the war he fought in as vehemently as he supported it before he went overseas. Kerrey left ready "to go at Hanoi with a knife in my teeth," as he once told an interviewer. He came out in 1969 maimed for life, saying, "If I had to go into the military now feeling the way I do, I would go to jail first."

After leaving the University of Nebraska with a B.S. in pharmacy in 1965, Kerrey graduated from Naval Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island, and volunteered for the SEALs. An outgrowth of the Navy's underwater demolition teams of World War II, the SEALS were founded in 1962 as an elite corps specializing in sabotage and surgical strikes. The training is arduous, and the corps attracts the most rugged and spirited volunteers. Kerrey is unsettled by discussion of what happened on the night of March 14, 1969, but his SEAL buddies like to tell the story.

Kerrey's seven-man platoon raided an island in the bay of Nha Trang in an effort to capture the leader of a Viet Cong "sapper team," a crack sabotage unit. After scaling a cliff in the dead of night in order to launch a surprise attack at daybreak, Kerrey and his men split into two groups to take up positions. But the guerrilla camp was not where they thought it would be, and the SEALs found themselves in a confused firefight. A grenade exploded in front of Kerrey, blowing off his right foot and sprinkling his face and body with shrapnel. Somehow he stayed conscious and directed his platoon's fire. After he was re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

moved by Medivac, the others were able to escape by boat. Michael Ambrose, Kerrey's second-in-command, looked for the severed lower leg. But nothing was left of it.

Kerrey spent nine months in hospitals for burn victims and amputees. It left him both bitter and grateful. "Government saved my life right after it damn near killed me," he says today. "I can talk calmer about it now. But I was a lot angrier in '69 than I think I realize today." Nominated for the Medal of Honor, he decided to refuse it. "He just thought it was bogus," says Ambrose, who originally nominated him for a Silver Star award that was later upgraded. Kerrey remembers feeling that "you bring people home, you clean them up, put a medal around their necks, and that's what everybody thinks war is about." But after a talk with a SEAL instructor named Barry Enoch, who told him he owed it to the team, he changed his mind and accepted the award from President Nixon in May 1970.

Vietnam left him with an allergy to the euphemisms of war and a habit of translating military issues into visceral terms. "I usually start grating my teeth when the debate starts focusing on the intellectual question of whether we should use force," Kerrey says. "The operative question is: Are you willing to kill somebody for freedom? Are you willing to put your own life or your kid's life on the line?" In October he made a speech about chemical weapons. "Only within the bowels of the Pentagon is it possible to develop a rationale which permits the continued production of chemical weapons," he said, arguing that the Bigeye Bomb is not an effective deterrent because no military commander would ever be willing to use it.

Kerrey's depth of feeling is impressive. What he has yet to demonstrate is an approach to foreign policy that consists of more than lessons derived from Vietnam. He has spoken out against support for the *contras* on the Vietnam analogy, and opposes any settlement in Cambodia that involves the Khmer Rouge. But where his experience doesn't guide him, Kerrey seems lost. Nothing he has done in his ten months in the Senate has shown much sophistication about the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, the European Community, China, the Mideast, or South Africa.

After the war, Kerrey went back to Lincoln and worked briefly as a pharmacist before going into the restaurant business, which has since made him a millionaire. His political involvement revolved mostly around protesting the war. In 1971 he became involved in Allard K. Lowenstein's drive to register newly enfranchised 18- to 20-year-old voters. Kerrey was moved by Lowenstein's call to democratic participation and calls him "the finest patriot I ever met." But Kerrey doesn't seem to know much about Lowenstein or the political tradition he came out of. The young Senator from the Plains is, in many ways, a political foundling. He has little understanding of the Midwestern populism of William Jennings Bryan, Bob La Follette, and George Norris, Nebraska's liberal Republican Senator from 1913 to 1943 who sponsored the Tennessee Valley Authority. He doesn't like to be called a liberal, but doesn't explain why not. For fear of being pegged, he resists finding a place in the political cosmos.

When he announced out of the blue that he was running for Governor in 1981, even close friends didn't know whether he meant to run as a Democrat or Republican. But with his good looks, hero's background, and natural talent for television, the young entrepreneur was an immediate hit. Despite views that many considered to be too liberal for the prairie, such as support for a gay rights ordinance that lost on a referendum, Kerrey portrayed himself as a fiscally conservative businessman, and after winning the Democratic primary by a wide margin, he narrowly defeated the incumbent Charles Thone.

Kerrey's inexperience showed. He had declared raising farm prices a major goal; once elected he found himself unable to do anything about them except rail at Reagan for being insufficiently generous. An unabashed believer in vast Government subsidies for his food-producing constituents, he once called Government involvement in agriculture an "astounding success." He devoted much time and energy to drafting educational reforms mandating a longer school year and higher pay for teachers that passed the state legislature, but were never funded.

A crisis hit almost immediately after Kerrey was inaugurated. Two state-chartered savings institutions in Lincoln failed; depositors discovered that their life savings were not insured. Kerrey couldn't find funds to cover the multimillion-dollar bailout, which meant many depositors lost money. There was also a whiff of personal scandal. Kerrey went in on a real estate deal with a friend named William Wright, who was the principal owner of State Security, one of the banks that went under. There is no evidence that he interfered on behalf of his friend, but he did create an appearance of impropriety by not putting his assets in a proper blind trust. "Many of the accusations of mistakes made on State Security are deserved, including the failure to think through my business associations," Kerrey says. "I plead guilty to them."

Kerrey's successes were mostly small ones: he eliminated a small budget deficit, deregulated telecommunications and branch banking, and settled long-standing disputes over water rights and state regulation of fundamentalist Christian schools. But he remained popular in part because of his readiness to admit to and learn from his mistakes. And he showed courage in asking for budget cuts that hit his supporters hard: after getting strong backing from the teachers' union and the state employees union, he denied both groups promised pay increases. Challenging the state university's budget, he tried unsuccessfully to close the pharmacy school he'd graduated from.

Few Nebraskans, however, remember Kerrey's mixed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

record. What stands out is his affair with Debra Winger, which began when she went to Lincoln to film *Terms of Endearment* in 1983. With the exception of the odd Bible-thumper, few had any problem with the actress staying in the official residence. In one poll 76 percent said they thought her weekend sleepovers in the official residence were "all right," and another 12 percent thought it was "nobody's business." (With his own approval rating at a mere 70 percent, Kerrey joked that more people thought it was OK for Winger to stay in the Governor's mansion than it was for him.) Most Nebraskans seemed to enjoy the fact that a star liked their boy.

The relationship with Winger molded Kerrey's image for the rest of his term. He reminded people of California Governor Jerry Brown, who dated Linda Ronstadt. He played "Cosmic Bob" to Brown's "Governor Moonbeam." There's a measure of truth in the tag. Kerrey can be opaque. In 1984 he told an American Legion conference that the "individual can approach the limitless." In 1985, after breaking up with Winger, he made the surprise announcement that he wouldn't seek reelection, saying, "In my heart there is lacking the necessary call for four more years." Nobody could quite figure out what the real reason was. He told reporters that running again would be "answering other people's dreams, not my own," and said that he wanted to clean his own bathroom. He talked to Jim Lehrer about the hurt of "doing things that aren't you." David Kotok, who covered Kerrey for the *Omaha World-Herald*, notes, "If you sit and talk to him, he can kind of spin off into esoteric areas."

Kerrey, who has said he listens to an "inner voice," does have a visionary streak that raises some legitimate concerns. He sometimes emits incoherent exhortations, and can sound like a Democratic Ronald Reagan in speeches that make listeners feel good about America but aren't tethered to reality. Kerrey is also unsure enough about politics as a vocation to make people wonder what he is doing in high office. Sometimes he seems to wonder too. Just as Brown left to get real with Mother Teresa in Calcutta, Kerrey felt compelled to look for genuine experiences again.

But Kerrey's version of what's "real" is more that of a Nebraskan druggist than a Californian monk. His mountaintop was an Omaha high school, where he went after leaving the Governor's mansion. The teaching episode was a good idea that turned into a fiasco. In Nebraska even the Governor needs certification in order to instruct students in government. The Omaha Education Association asked him not to tell the press he was teaching, and Kerrey gave up after a term. He then moved to Santa Barbara to co-teach Walter Capps's Vietnam course. But in March 1987, Nebraska Senator Ed Zorinsky died suddenly, and though Kerrey wanted more time off, he realized he might not have an opportunity like this for a long while.

The campaign was a walk. In the first debate at the Nebraska State Fair, David Karnes, who had been appointed to fill the temporary vacancy, argued for phasing out crop subsidies and said, "We need fewer farmers at this point in time." True enough, but a dumb political move in a state where one in three people works in agriculture. Karnes got booed, and his own press secretary called him inarticulate. Kerrey, by contrast, stuck to positive themes, putting together a series of patriotic, morning-in-America-type commercials, and showed deft judgment at critical moments in the campaign. When an obscure radical party demanded the right to participate in the debate and Karnes supported the claim, Kerrey refused: "A party of 14 members that holds its nominating convention in Booth No. 2 at Denny's Restaurant should not be included," he said. The firm stand boosted his popularity.

It is too early to evaluate fairly Kerrey's performance in the Senate. He hasn't yet sponsored a major piece of legislation. But signs point to a career that will be distinguished more by sensibility than substance, more by leadership on selected issues of conscience than by legislative achievements. Kerrey is trying to develop a portfolio on the big-think domestic issues of health care and education, subjects he feels close to because of his time inside hospitals and schools. But as with foreign policy, he seems to have a hard time moving beyond his own experience. Kerrey says he wants to lead a national debate on these issues, and that he is looking for "radical solutions." So far he has not been able to articulate his positions, let alone build coalitions or devise original approaches.

Kerrey doesn't seem to know that some of the ideas that are new to him are discarded Democratic dogma. He talks about socialized medicine as if he were the first to consider it. He wants to create something he calls an Educational Trust Corporation, which would provide federal funding to encourage state and local school reform projects, like the Chicago local control initiative. It sounds nice in theory, but it is not a realistic solution, since it depends on Congress voting $50 billion in new taxes. Kerrey should be looking harder at ways the federal Government can encourage educational innovation without spending billions, like alternative certification for teachers, for which his own experience in the Omaha schools demonstrates the need. Hard though he might work, he will probably never master the details of policy the way a Bill Bradley or an Al Gore does. He's a quick study, but lacks an analytic bent.

A subtle mind, however, is not the sole criterion for leadership, and Kerrey has other qualities that distinguish him from the Senate's policy nerds. Try to imagine Sam Nunn singing "Waltzing Mathilda" out of key. "He has a facility for telling the truth," says Democratic pollster Harrison Hickman. "There's no game to it. It comes straight from the heart." Others note that he's brilliant on television, that he's got a self-deprecating

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sense of humor, and has "the vision thing" in spades. And his state is next to Iowa. All this makes Bob Kerrey—despite his limited exposure to the key issues of foreign and domestic policy—a Democratic political consultant's wet dream.

As a potential national candidate, Kerrey reminds many observers of Gary Hart in happier days. There are some similarities: like Hart, Kerrey is intense and inner-directed, a handsome new face in the crowd. The two have in common Bill Shore, a former member of Hart's inner circle who now works as Kerrey's policy director. Kerrey lacks Hart's broad education and disciplined mind. But he has better human relations skills. Hart absorbs material through reading; Kerrey learns by listening. Hart makes people around him nervous; Kerrey "has a great sense of ease about himself," as Shore says. "He relaxes the people around him." Most important, Kerrey lacks the arrogance that was Hart's undoing.

Kerrey doesn't foreclose the option that he might run for higher office someday. "If I ever arrive at the point where presumptuously I think that my coherent picture of what the nation ought to do is preferable to everyone else's, then maybe I'll go out and say I want to be President," he says. "But right now I'm not at that stage." One scenario has Kerrey as a running mate for Bradley or Cuomo, who are more plausible world leaders. And a Quayle-Kerrey matchup in '92 is a prospect to relish. But before he jumps at any opportunities, Kerrey would do well to listen to Nebraska's crotchety senior Senator, Jim Exon, who says the boy "needs seasoning."

Before he goes anywhere, Kerrey has to demonstrate some staying power. His change of heart in 1985 raises the question of whether he will have the patience to stick with the drudgery of lawmaking. Like many budding statesmen of the David Letterman generation, he seems almost too detached and ambivalent to be in politics at all. Inevitably, the one-dimensionality of life on Capitol Hill will begin to wear on him. He might simply walk away again if it all becomes too "unreal," or if he feels he is compromising his beliefs.

"If I went into his office and told him he could no longer be a U.S. Senator, that wouldn't be such a big thing," says chief of staff Bill Hoppner. That speaks well of Bob Kerrey as human being. But it leaves you wondering about him as politician. •

Pinochet gives way, gracelessly.

FALL OF THE PATRIARCH

By Tina Rosenberg

SANTIAGO

A general rules his country with an iron hand for 15 years. One day he calls elections. He is the only candidate. He enjoys the services of the national treasury, the television channels, the police, and the army. He changes his image, handing out houses and bicycles, patting babies, smiling like grandpa at Christmas. He loses. His attempts to rig the election are thwarted by his own military junta. A year later he is still in office, presiding over his own demise. He makes noisy threats, and no one takes them seriously. He has become an embarrassment to dictators everywhere. He is a disgrace, a joke.

This is not a García Márquez tale, but a true story whose protagonist is Augusto Pinochet. Chile's descent into magic realism began on September 11, 1973, with Pinochet's overthrow of Salvador Allende. Chile became Macondo. Santiago's Mapocho river turned red with blood; police stole the bodies at a funeral, laced the coffins to the top of a waiting car, and sped off; as the pope watched and a choir sang of peace and reconciliation in a Santiago park, 20 feet below the podium tanks shot billows of stinging water and tear gas bombs into the stampeding crowd. As Pinochet ends his rule, the tragic drama has given way to comic pathos. On December 14 Patricio Aylwin, a sober, 71-year-old Christian Democrat representing the united opposition, will almost certainly win the presidency, and he will almost certainly take office on March 14. Chile will return to democracy.

But we've heard that line before. Since 1979 military dictatorships have fallen in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, Ecuador, Bolivia, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Peru. Like the smoker who finds it easy to quit—he's done it dozens of times—most of these countries have returned to democracy several times and will soon find it neces-

TINA ROSENBERG, who last wrote for TNR about cocaine in Colombia, is a writer living in Santiago. Her book on violence in Latin America will be published by Morrow.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sary to do so again. And as democracies, some are indistinguishable from dictatorships, marked by massacres, torture, disappearances, repression of labor unions, and censorship. The worst human rights violators in Latin America—Peru, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala—are all "democracies." Their civilian presidents are mere decorations in authoritarian societies controlled by the military and traditional elites. An elected president is a step toward democracy, but it is just one step.

The term "returning" to democracy does not properly apply to much of Latin America, countries that never were real democracies. But Chile really was for 150 years, with one period of relatively benign military rule from 1927 to 1931. Before Pinochet, it was one of the few countries in Latin America (Uruguay and Costa Rica are others) where García Márquez's malarial hallucinations did not take place. Before 1973 the torture, disappearances, and terrorism that would come to characterize Pinochet's Chile were unknown here. In 1968 a case of torture scandalized the nation: a prisoner's ears had been boxed. It is history's cruel joke that at the moment Chile is South America's only dictatorship after so many years as the continent's only democracy. Unfortunately, it may become that again.

AUGUSTO PINOCHET BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

It was Chile's good fortune to be poor and isolated, the only Spanish colony that lost money every year. It contained boring minerals, poor land for plantation agriculture, and fierce Indians who refused to go gently into slavery. Surrounded by the world's driest desert, the ridge of the Andes, the Pacific, and Antarctica, Chile offered the Spanish little to sack that was worth the trip. The settlers came to stay, and Chile avoided the feudal Latin heritage of a silent, cowed lower class and an all-powerful oligarchy that considered itself above the law.

Chile's second piece of luck was a businessman named Diego Portales, who came to power in 1829. Portales had the novel idea that the state should solve the problems of society as a whole and not just those of the oligarchy. He made his government into the arbiter of Chile's disputes, emphasizing the rule of law, and left office so poor he didn't have change to buy cigarettes.

Chile never became one of Latin America's richest countries, but it was the most middle class, with the highest levels of education and most egalitarian distribution of wealth. Just as important, Chileans solved their problems through voting and discussion. Chileans did not just inhabit Chile. They were citizens: they felt a stake in their government and they followed its laws. This is still true. In Argentina last year 30,000 people paid their income taxes; in Chile, a nation two-fifths as large, 400,000 did. Corruption is negligible. The courts, except for political crimes, work and work fairly. Chileans joke that tanks stop at red lights during a military coup.

Ironically, this history of democracy and civilian rule helped pave the way for Pinochet. In 1970 Chile became the first country in the world to elect a Marxist. And Allende was a democratic Marxist. Under his government there were no political prisoners and no censorship. He did not use repression when the right, financed by the CIA, initiated strikes and sabotage that increased the chaos produced by his mismanagement. When the chaos became overwhelming, Chileans turned to the military precisely because they didn't think a Pinochet could happen. The military had always defended the constitution. In December 1971 Allende's most trusted general had tried to sue a right-wing magazine for its suggestion that the armed forces should break their loyalty to Allende. "Military coups are not seen in Chile," said the general, whose name was Augusto Pinochet. Even the Christian Democrats, with Aylwin as the party president, supported the coup. Countless Chileans have told me that they thought the military would stay for six months, clean house, and get out.

Instead the soldiers burned the house down. "Traditional democracy," said Pinochet in a speech to a commission studying a new constitution, "is no longer able

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to face an adversary that has destroyed the state." His novel theory was that since democracy invariably leads to communism, as Allende showed, the only true democracy was "protected democracy." Protected democracy prohibited congress, a free press, political parties, and an independent judiciary but legalized exile, mass arrests, and the "banning" of public figures, South Africa-style. The idea of destroying democracy in order to save it also facilitated Pinochet's free market economic policies by dissolving Chile's traditional interest groups. All meetings were banned. Even centrist union leaders, peasant organizers, and neighborhood leaders were killed, tortured, or exiled. Miss Chile was appointed by the government.

Pinochet's assault on Chile's political culture did not prevent him from using it to keep himself in office. In 1980 he won a plebiscite on his new constitution. The vote was patently fraudulent—turnout in one village reached 110 percent—but it is likely that Chileans, distracted by an economic boom that brought them new TV sets and refrigerators, would have approved the constitution on their own. The constitution provided for the plebiscite of 1988: a yes-or-no vote on another eight years for Pinochet. It was a stroke of genius. When the economy crashed in 1982, the protests were undercut by the existence of an "institutional" way out—the plebiscite—which, though far away, appealed to the legalistic Chilean mentality. The constitution allowed Pinochet to stay in office until 1989.

Pinochet surely must be horrified by what is happening today. He was dragged into holding the plebiscite of October 1988. As the votes were being counted, the official newspaper *La Nación* was printing 100,000 copies whose headlines awarded Pinochet 51.3 percent of the vote. Mrs. Pinochet was quoted: "We showed the world that we are a democratic country and that only we decide our future." She was a prophet; *La Nación* junked its edition after one of the junta's generals announced on television that Pinochet had lost.

And he failed completely in his efforts to depoliticize Chile. Although it appeared for a few years that Chileans had indeed lost their spirit of dissent, their apathy was mainly caused by fear. Now that the repression has softened, Chile has once again become hyperpoliticized. Politics is the only topic of conversation. Santiago's radio stations incessantly play the jingles of the three presidential candidates and the city's eight major senate and dozens of house candidates. The jingles are all slickly recorded, indistinguishable from Coke commercials and from each other. The TV ads are even worse—full of children, fruited plains, and strong, noble Chileans working. On weekends the country's major streets are filled with caravans, cars with horns blaring, and young people spilling out waving banners and balloons and throwing flyers. A candidate who cannot attend a political rally can have a video made and shown on wide-screen TV in the street.

It is not by any means a fair election. In September a young leftist politician, Jecar Neghme, was assassinated on the street by a paramilitary death squad, and every day more politicians receive death threats. In a typical day's news, dozens of people attending an Aylwin rally in the South were beaten up and arrested, two men broke into the house of Aylwin's campaign chief and beat up his wife, and an opposition journalist's car was set on fire. The secret police are still torturing. Despite the ban on TV advertising before November 14, Hernán Büchi, Pinochet's candidate, ran ads showing the candidate playing sports and speaking at rallies, disguised as ads for a book called *The Büchi Phenomenon*. City offices routinely deny opposition candidates permission to stage rallies or use city buildings.

There is one real issue in the campaign: Pinochet, represented in the campaign by Büchi, 40, of Swiss and Yugoslav ancestry. His slogan is "Büchi is Different." It is an understatement. This is surely one of the world's most eccentric political candidates. He lives almost solely on yogurt, jogs every day, and always walked up the 12 flights of stairs to his office. He wears his blond hair in a collar-length Beatles cut, lives in a rented house, and does not even own a car. When he studied mining engineering at the University of Chile, he was a member of the Leftist Revolutionary Movement. From left-wing fanaticism he has moved to right-wing fanaticism, becoming the economic whiz kid of Pinochet's government, a Milton Friedman free marketer with ice for blood.

Büchi is the opposite of the Latin populist caudillo. Early in 1989 he resigned his job as treasury minister to ponder his candidacy, then after 40 days of reflection announced to generalized shock that he was not a politician and had no desire to be president. A huge campaign then arose, financed by Chile's business community, to make him reconsider. Posters sprouted everywhere showing Büchi with the Star of Bethlehem. He changed his mind.

He is learning to be a politician. He started his campaign literally hiding from journalists, racing through the script of the same five-minute speech at all his events, and brushing off popular demands with technical explanations about money supply and commercial balances. Now he's making fanciful promises of a million new jobs and private health insurance for everyone. In October a Büchi rally packed 100,000 people into the National Stadium. But he suffers greatly from his unwillingness to separate himself from Pinochet. Aside from presiding over an economy that depended on repression of interest groups, Büchi had no direct connection to the government's human rights violations. But he refuses to criticize them. When asked about human rights, he turns the question into an attack on Aylwin for accepting Communist support. He is roundly booed when he campaigns in slums; he slunk out of one, La Victoria, after being spat upon by old ladies. The latest polls award him around 25 percent of the vote, less than half the support Aylwin enjoys.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As Büchi has begun to inflate his promises, Aylwin has begun to deflate his. Although he is on the right of the parties in the opposition, through compromise and subterfuge (he became his party's candidate through a series of under-the-table maneuvers) he has won the unified support of the opposition, from the Leftist Revolutionary Movement to the traditional right. In October the heads of the opposition parties signed a document promising Aylwin liberty to govern as he pleases. His campaign is directed less toward winning the presidency than to assuring that he will be able to govern. He is consciously trying to limit expectations, telling sectors that have suffered under Pinochet that he understands their economic problems (a step Büchi leaves out), but that he will only be able to do so much. No free university, for example. No across-the-board salary raises.

Few in Chile doubt that Aylwin will win the presidency and take office in March. (The existence of a third candidate, an egomaniacal businessman, might throw the election into a runoff in February, but Aylwin will win that.) But Pinochet retains a great deal of power. He has already influenced the choice of president (Aylwin was attractive to many because he is right-wing enough to calm the military), and he will remain commander in chief. He does not have the power to stage another coup. But he might be able to make life difficult for the president with smaller defiances of civilian orders. The secret police will be tucked inside the army, where it will answer to Pinochet.

What is clear is that the generals will not go to jail. "If one of my men is touched," Pinochet threatened in October, "the rule of law ends." Even his own partisans, Büchi included, jumped on him. Indeed, the military has permitted trials in a few isolated cases, the most famous being the case of the two students, Rodrigo Rojas (a resident of Washington) and Carmen Gloria Quintana, who were set on fire by soldiers in 1986. The lieutenant in charge of the patrol received 300 days for the "quasi crime" of failing to aid the burned students, though at least the military permitted the trial, showing that it does not view every trial as an attack on the institution. But massive trials and trials of high-ranking officers are another matter. In 1978, in an interesting twist on the concept of amnesty (usually applied to a government's opponents), the government amnestied *itself* for all crimes committed before that date. As the vast majority of deaths, torture, and disappearances were committed in the first years after the coup, few serious crimes are now left uncovered. When Aylwin talked about overturning the law, Air Force Gen. Fernando Matthei, the junta's house democrat (it was his TV interview that ended the possibility of a rigged election the night of the plebiscite), responded that the transition to democracy would be jeopardized if the law was annulled. The opposition prudently replied that the plan was open to discussion.

Since losing the plebiscite, Pinochet has spent his remaining time in office sabotaging his successor. After 16 years of state control, the government has finally decided it's time to privatize. Since the plebiscite 20 large state businesses have been sold, and more are on the block, from the electric company to the state bank. Some were sold so cheaply that the businesses have earned back their purchase prices in their first year of private operation, depriving the incoming government of both the businesses and the resources they brought in. Where Pinochet cannot privatize he is trying to extend his control. He will name nine senators, a fifth of the new senate. Even elderly Supreme Court justices have taken advantage of a retire-now $50,000 bonus, allowing him to name younger replacements, and he is adding four seats to the Court.

Another challenge to Aylwin's government will come from the social organizations that will once again flower. For 16 years all the government has offered to many sectors of society is tear gas. People's expectations for democracy are tremendously high. When they find that better jobs and higher salaries will not appear overnight, some of these sectors will explode with waves of strikes and protests. Aylwin has solicited a promise from the head of Chile's opposition unions, a Christian Democrat, that workers will not demand miracles. And the coalition nature of Aylwin's government (a moderate, non-Marxist socialist, for example, will have the second-most important economic post) may help to persuade leftist sectors to remain patient.

Aylwin must also soothe investors. The Chilean economy, seen from the outside, is one of the healthiest in Latin America, growing at 6.5 percent last year. The problem is that the new wealth has gone to the old wealthy; Chile may be doing well, but Chileans are not. A million of Chile's 12 million people live without electricity or water. There are five million poor. Aylwin's challenge will be to make growth more socially responsive without scaring away investment. His economic program advocates keeping the export-oriented economic scheme while tinkering at the margins—raising taxes and increasing spending on health, education, and other social programs. In Argentina during President Raúl Alfonsín's economic crisis, people in slums told me they felt nostalgic for military rule. It would be tragic if democracy comes to represent economic decline for Chileans.

No one questions Aylwin's will or ability to lift the veil of fear enshrouding Chile. There will be no death squads, no persecution of social activists as in other "democracies." Chile will resume its culture of dissent and discussion, and García Márquez will find his muse elsewhere. The only country in the world to arrive at Marxism democratically is now the only country to vote a military dictator out of office on its own against his will. That Pinochet was not enough to erase four centuries of history is a hopeful sign for Chile. But it is a sobering message about the possibility of real democracy in other Latin countries, to whom history has not been as kind. •

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Doing the Right Thing?

A few weeks ago Henry Louis Gates Jr. wrote in the *New York Times*: "Historically, blacks have always worried aloud about the image that white Americans harbor of us, first because we have never had control of those images and, second, because the greater number of those images have been negative." Of late, control has shifted at least a little in the film world, but not all the images have become less negative. **Harlem Nights** (Paramount) was written, directed, and produced by Eddie Murphy, who stars in it—such an international powerhouse star (his seven pictures have grossed more than a billion dollars worldwide) that it's hard to believe his studio could force him to do anything he didn't want to do or could stop him from doing anything he wanted. And this is the result. Is this black man's film about black people any less worrisome than the many films Gates remembers?

The place is Harlem in 1918 and 1938, and, to begin with, it's a dream Harlem, with no trace of slum. In the first sequence, 1918, a black boy about ten years old shoots a man in the head at a crap table. The victim had been threatening the life of the man who runs the game, Richard Pryor; none of the other men around the table, all black, had made a move to help Pryor. The boy, who used a pistol of his own, wins the laughing praise of all the adults.

Now it's 1938. The boy has blossomed into natty Eddie Murphy, business associate of Pryor, who runs a successful nightclub-cum-gambling parlor-cum-brothel and who looks on Murphy as his ward. Gang war, the numbers racket, police troubles are the order of the day—and night.

In the course of the film, to end a quarrel Murphy shoots off a toe of the brothel madam, Della Reese, although they love each other in a mother-son way and they don't let a minor amputation spoil their love. Murphy also kills a woman in self-defense, in a boudoir scene apparently inspired by a similar scene in *Prizzi's Honor*. He also kills a number of hoods in gang wars. He never shoots "nice" people, and he participates in the (probable) murder of only one cop, who is a rat. Admittedly, Writer Murphy has given Actor Murphy some sketchy ground rules.

But he also gives the Murphy character his usual utilitarian attitude toward women; and gives him a blithe finish and an unclouded future in which to go on wending his criminal way.

Then there's the language. Profanity drenches almost every utterance by man or woman from beginning to end. Murphy is no pioneer in this matter. In 1966, when the film of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* was released, I thought it noteworthy that Elizabeth Taylor actually uttered the phrase "son of a bitch." By 1979 George C. Scott's daughter in *Hardcore* called him a fellator. Murphy didn't inaugurate blue language—it's practically de rigueur these days—any more than he inaugurated the "justified" killer who walks away unscathed. But I can't remember ever feeling so incessantly hammered with ugly talk as in *Harlem Nights*.

Sometimes such talk becomes a habitation for a work. In Mamet's play *Glengarry Glen Ross*, the blue language that jolts us in the very first minute is soon transmuted into the landscape within which the real estate salesmen dwell, becomes an almost poignant sign of how deeply they hate their lives. But in most usage these days, especially in films, the profanity is only an easy grab at heat and immediacy, a defense against being thought prudish or démodé. In *Harlem Nights* the profanity seems particularly oppressive after Murphy's concert film *Raw*. The profanity in both films is more than facile verism: it seems to be a bond of unity—as I've seen—with the blacks in Murphy's audience, especially the young blacks. They seem to be sharing, as I'd guess, in Murphy's triumph over the white owners of the film world who have to let him do as he chooses because he's a money mill for them.

I don't propose censorship for Murphy; I do propose a question. Gates and other black commentators remind whites that the progress of American blacks toward equality has been minor compared with what yet needs to be achieved. Is this film and the Murphy persona what black people need at this moment? Is this what young black people, especially, need just now in their thinking about themselves? Hundreds of

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Henry V. *Who could have imagined that anyone would challenge Laurence Olivier by adapting, directing, and starring in another version of the Shakespeare play? Who could have imagined that Kenneth Branagh would bring it off? He does, more rather than less, and with glory. (Reviewed 12/4/89)* **My Left Foot.** *If you let yourself be put off because this is about a man with cerebral palsy, you will cheat yourself of much excellent acting and engrossing, non-slushy drama. Based on Christy Brown's autobiography. (11/27/89)* **Mystery Train.** *More spare stylistic elegance from Jim Jarmusch and even less story than in his first two pictures. His treatment of interweaving lives in a seedy Memphis hotel is astringent in its view of American pop culture—and of film itself. (12/11/89)* **sex, lies, and videotape.** *Steven Soderbergh's first film—about the sexual ambience in which four young people live—is extraordinary. (9/4/89)* **—SK**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thousands of people—including whites, of course—will storm the Murphy box offices; but isn't it possible that this foul-mouthed, gun-slinging, woman-derogating smoothie is not the best blessing for blacks?

Why, it might be asked, do I pick on Murphy? How often has this column lighted into the vile talk and offhand murder and woman-treading in white pictures? Rarely. Because they are white in a generally white film world and are balanced by other pictures (not necessarily prim) that operate otherwise. But Murphy occupies a major portion of the still-narrow black territory in American film; so the Murphy persona looms larger and has greater impact than just one more gamy white picture.

I await comment on *Harlem Nights* from the socio-political solons who felt obliged to comment on Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*. Lee, an immensely gifted writer-director, dared to deal with social troubles, so the solons felt obligated to rule on his film. (One of them even said that it might harm David Dinkins's Mayoral chances.) Murphy is only an entertainer making entertainment; so the (to me) more questionable, if less direct, effects of his persona and film are not likely to bother the sages.

It's additionally troubling, not secondary, that Murphy is a poor writer for himself. His early appearances in films directed by others, *48 Hrs.*, *Trading Places*, the first *Beverly Hills Cop*, were nervy, impudent, unsettling comedy. The second *Cop* picture, which he co-wrote, was something of a decline, and the slope has steepened since. Here he moves through a dull replay of a 1930s George Raft role with almost no comedy.

A coincidence. (?) Danny Aiello, who was the Italian-American pizzeria owner in Spike Lee's film, is here an Italian-American detective who harasses Pryor and Murphy.

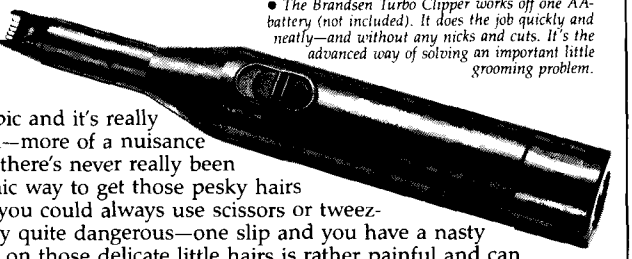
Almost simultaneously with *Harlem Nights* comes **Sidewalk Stories** (Island) produced, written, and directed by a black actor named Charles Lane, who plays the leading role and has a virtually all-black supporting cast. It's a silent film set in New York today about a poor young semi-vagabond's care for a lost child—presumably suggested by Chaplin's *The Kid* and with Chaplinesque ambitions. I wish I could join in the praise for *Sidewalk Stories*, especially as counterpoise to *Harlem Nights*, but I thought it a tenuous script amateurishly directed and acted. I almost add "alas," because Lane is a black man who just wants to make films about black people; he's not a glitzy patronizer of black audiences. His first film, however, stumbles. •

How to take care of a pesky little problem, with...

Brandsen™ Turbo Clipper

only $12.95*

But read this ad for an even better deal!



• *The Brandsen Turbo Clipper works off one AA-battery (not included). It does the job quickly and neatly—and without any nicks and cuts. It's the advanced way of solving an important little grooming problem.*

It's not the greatest topic and it's really not a serious problem—more of a nuisance perhaps, but until now, there's never really been a good, easy and hygienic way to get those pesky hairs out of your nose. Sure, you could always use scissors or tweezers. The former are really quite dangerous—one slip and you have a nasty little injury; and pulling on those delicate little hairs is rather painful and can easily give rise to infection. Your doctor would definitely veto it. The ***Brandsen™ Turbo Clipper*** is essentially a tiny hair trimmer—a mini-version of what your barber uses to trim your neck and shape your sideburns. It works like a charm. And it also does a great job on your ears, on your eyebrows and even to shape your mustache.

We are the exclusive importers of ***Brandsen™*** quality grooming instruments and import the ***Turbo Clipper*** in very large quantities. We can therefore bring it to you at the low price of just $12.95. We use it as a "customer getter," as a means to increase our buyers file by at least 25,000 names per month. But we have an even better deal: ***Buy two for $25.90, and we'll send you a third one, with our compliments—absolutely FREE!*** And we believe so strongly that this will be a revelation to you that we give you this guarantee: If you are not totally delighted, do not return the ***Turbo Clipper***. Drop us a note and say: "I didn't like it, and I've thrown it away." Your refund check will be in the return mail. (Sorry, if you buy three, we'll have to ask you to send two of them back—unused, please!)

This is an offer you can't refuse. There is no risk and no hassle, and you're in for a wonderful surprise. We can accept only mail orders, accompanied by check, with this offer (no phone, no charge). Please write your name and address on a sheet of paper; also write "**Code A132.**" Tell us how many *Clippers* you want and include $2.95 for one (1) and $5.90 for three (3) for postage and insurance (plus sales tax for CA delivery). Take advantage of this outstanding offer. You will be delighted! Mail to ⟶

since 1967

haverhills®

131 Townsend Street, San Francisco, CA 94107

THE NEW REPUBLIC

POLO SHIRT

The New Republic is proud to present the ultimate fashion statement: The New Republic polo shirt. Fashioned out of 100% cotton and custom embroidered with our attractive new logo, The New Republic polo will become the staple of your casual wardrobe. It also makes the perfect gift for TNR aficionados on your shopping list. The New Republic polo is available in crisp white with the logo embroidered in navy blue, in adult sizes, small, medium, large and extra large. Only $24.50 per shirt plus $1.25 per shirt for shipping. Satisfaction guaranteed! Order yours today.

To: THE NEW REPUBLIC POLO SHIRT OFFER, 1220 19th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036

Please send me _____ polo shirt(s) in size(s) _____

I have enclosed a check/money order in the amount of _____ to cover the cost of the shirt ($24.50 each) plus shipping ($1.25 each) plus applicable sales tax (D.C. Residents add 6%.) My address is:

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Spirits and the Letters

BY ROBERT ALTER

The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem, 1932-1940 edited by Gershom Scholem translated by Gary Smith and Andre Lefevere

(Schocken, 276 pp., $27.95)

The relationship between Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem is surely one of the extraordinary intellectual friendships of the 20th century. It is not only that each—Benjamin as critic, Scholem as historian—was an innovative thinker of the first order, transforming the intellectual horizons of his field, or that they wrestled for 25 years over intellectual and spiritual issues that still seem urgent. It is also that, on a human level, the moral fiber of their friendship proved so tough and so resilient despite their drastically divergent paths, and despite the most soul-trying historical circumstances. To the end, they continued to share the intellectual passions of their student years. They never hesitated to challenge one another, even when the difference between them was painful, as when Benjamin dismayed Scholem by moving, however ambiguously, from a metaphysical to a Marxist perspective. They never ceased to make the highest demands of each other, because they always had the highest expectations of each other's gifts. Whatever their differences of viewpoint and loyalty, each felt toward the other a love for the person and a generously affectionate admiration for his mind.

Scholem and Benjamin met in their native Berlin in the summer of 1915, when Scholem was 17 and Benjamin was 23. Both were deeply involved in the ideological debates of the German student movement of those years. Both were in a process of vehement rebellion against the complacencies of their own assimilated German-Jewish bourgeois background. Each had determined to confront the world with what Scholem in his memoir of their friendship would call "radical demands." In his case, this rebellion had already manifested itself in an uncompromising rejection of assimilation—in the adoption of Zionism, in an immersion in Hebrew (which he had managed to master in a scant two years), in the study of the Talmud and other Jewish sources. Benjamin repeatedly contemplated all three of these courses himself, at least for the next 15 years, but it was German and French culture that continued to draw him. Still, even in the most ardent moments of his never quite consummated affair with communism, Benjamin's fascination with Judaism did not flag; indeed, it made him vaguely suspect in the eyes of the Marxists, including his friend Brecht.

In the years after their first encounter, Benjamin and Scholem spent an increasing amount of time together, including an extended period in 1918-19 in Switzerland, where Benjamin was living with his wife, Dora, in domestic storms into which Scholem was inadvertently drawn. After their return to Germany they were together intermittently, and the volume of their correspondence begins to swell. The intimacy in the letters grows by slow stages. At first Scholem is addressed as "Herr Scholem," then as "Dear Gerhard" but still with the formal *Sie*, and not until mid-1921 with the intimate *Du*. After Scholem's immigration to Palestine in 1924, their relationship was entirely epistolary, with the exception of two brief reunions in Paris, the first in 1927 and the second in 1938. Two years later Benjamin ended his own life, when he thought he was being turned back at the Spanish border in his attempt to flee Nazi-occupied France.

A two-volume edition of Benjamin's correspondence was published in Germany in 1966, edited by Scholem and Theodor Adorno. (It is not yet available in English.) From 1917 onward, the overwhelming majority of his letters are addressed to Scholem—though one should add that the published correspondence does not entirely represent the variety of his epistolary connections, since Benjamin had other correspondents who were not so meticulous in preserving everything he sent them. Because, with only five important exceptions, Scholem did not retain copies of the handwritten letters he sent to Benjamin, his half of the correspondence does not appear.

Benjamin was also a paper saver (both men were passionate bibliophiles), but when he fled Berlin in March 1933, the Nazi authorities seized all his papers, and none survived. His final flight, this time from Paris in 1940, left behind another set of papers, duly confiscated by the Gestapo, which were preserved because they were accidentally stuck into the file of the *Pariser Tageszeitung*. At the end of the war they were transferred to Russia, and later to the archives of the German Democratic Republic in Potsdam. Scholem learned about the existence of these papers and in 1966 was allowed to examine them in the GDR archives, where he discovered all of his own letters to Benjamin from 1933 onward.

He was promised photocopies, but Communist bureaucratic caprice intervened, and it was only 11 years later, around the time of his 80th birthday, that the copies were unexpectedly delivered. Thanks to that moment of relenting on the part of a faceless bureaucracy, we possess a precious set of documents of modern intellectual history. The German edition of the correspondence, edited by Scholem, appeared in 1980, two years before his death. Now we have the letters in a generally competent English version. It is a book that combines brilliant philosophic and cultural speculation and argumentation with the poignancy of autobiography, holding up a mirror to dark times.

The early phase of the correspondence, before Scholem's emigration, often has the quality (even in its one-sided form) of an untiring after-class continuation of a seminar discussion by two ferociously bright graduate students. Benjamin, obviously responding to a series of proposals in what must have been equally voluminous letters from Scholem, pursues definitions and distinctions in an effort to understand Kant's theory of knowledge, cubism and the status of representation in painting, Franz Rosenzweig's theology, the nature of language, and much else. There is a certain brash confidence in Benjamin's early letters that was no doubt shared by Scholem: the two were clearly impatient with the superficiality of most of their teachers and contemporaries, acting almost as though they were the only two good minds in the neighborhood. (Their youthful extravagance had a good degree of justification.)

The two-way correspondence spanning the years 1932-40 shows both men in a sober and sometimes somber spirit.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This shift was equally a consequence of what was happening in the world and of their stage of life. The Germany that had intellectually nurtured them had been taken over by the forces of barbarism. Benjamin was in exile in France, eking out a living from free-lance journalism and a small stipend from the Marxist (but eclectic) Institute for Social Research, which had migrated from Frankfurt to New York. Sometimes he was so poor that he could barely afford stationery on which to write his letters. Because of his poverty and his persistent marginality, he contemplated the possibility of suicide as early as 1931; with the advent of Hitler, he brooded over the prospect of a new world war in which, perhaps by means of poison gas, humanity would be annihilated.

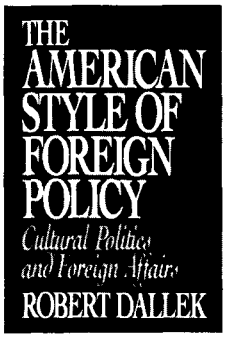
Scholem, whose beeline "from Berlin to Jerusalem" (the title of his memoir) stood in contrast to Benjamin's vocational zigzags, was secure enough professionally and economically in a professorship of Jewish mysticism at the Hebrew University, which was founded the year after his arrival in Palestine. But the Zionist community there was profoundly shaken by the sustained waves of murderous Arab attacks against it that began in 1936. Scholem wanted to cling to the idea of a binational Jewish-Arab state, but it became increasingly clear to him that there would be no peaceful solution to the conflict of the two communities in Palestine. All that he had hoped for in the way of Jewish spiritual renewal seemed to be frustrated by the internal divisions, the shortsightedness, the extremism, and the strident politicking within the Zionist movement, at the very moment that European Jewry was being isolated and ominously threatened.

If Benjamin was an ardent devotee of European culture utterly despairing of its future, Scholem, at least on some days, was no less despairing of the future of Zionism. Thus, just two months before the outbreak of World War II, he writes Benjamin from Jerusalem that the experience of the last six years leaves no grounds for hope that revolution will solve mankind's problems. "The workers' movement as a revolutionary political factor is deader than a dead dog, there is no point in upholding any illusions on this point." So much for Benjamin's political pieties (which he had finally renounced with a sense of relief after the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, according to those close to him at the time). As for Scholem's own pieties:

> The future of Judaism is totally cloaked in darkness: it cannot pretend to be invisible—inactive and asleep—as others may (perhaps) try to do, because it will no longer have the bodily basis of an existence which is still at the disposal of the vanquished socialists. We aren't able to make alliances any longer, since there is no one left who might be interested in doing so. We must not give up on this generation, and since nothing could replace Palestine in its function for Judaism but empty phrases evocative of nothing, how should I conceive of the years to come? In this darkness I only know how to be silent.

The letters of Benjamin and Scholem are written out of a loneliness stoically sustained—not quite isolation, but the solitariness of genius pursuing its own way against the grain of the times, making "radical demands" that political reality would not meet. In 1930-31, after Benjamin finally renounced his long-deferred scheme of learning Hebrew and coming to Palestine, Scholem wrote three remarkable letters to his friend, of which he made copies, and which appear in the two-volume *Briefe*. (It is a pity that the whole exchange was not added to this English edition of the correspondence from 1932 onward.) In the last of these, dated May 6, 1931, Scholem shrewdly observes, "You are endangered more by your desire for community, even if it be the apocalyptic community of the revolution, than by the horror of loneliness that speaks from so many of your writings." Scholem had sought to

The shape of American foreign policy



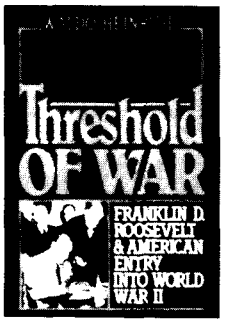
The American Style of Foreign Policy
Cultural Politics and Foreign Affairs
ROBERT DALLEK

"A stimulating and provocative inquiry into the dramatic roots of American foreign policy." **—Ronald Steel**

"Dallek raises some of the most important questions that must be asked about past and present diplomacy.... [He] aims to stir up debate, and he certainly succeeds."
—Walter LaFeber, *The New Republic*

"An important book which every informed American should read."
—The Christian Science Monitor

352 pp. paper $8.95

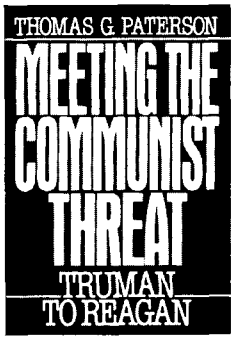


Threshold of War
Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Entry into World War II
WALDO HEINRICHS

"A compelling story of Roosevelt's road to war.... Likely to remain the most authoritative account of the coming of the Pacific war."
—Akira Iriye, *University of Chicago*

"An expert examination of FDR's formulation of policy in the nine critical months before Pearl Harbor."
—Diplomatic History

304 pp.; maps
paper $8.95



Meeting the Communist Threat
Truman to Reagan
THOMAS G. PATERSON

"[Paterson] offers a most provocative account of [the Cold War] conflict, doing so in a series of essays that often flow into seamless narrative." ***—The St. Petersburg Times***

"[A] lucidly written and persuasively argued collection."
—Choice

"I think it is very important that Americans read this book."
—J. William Fulbright, Former Chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

336 pp. paper $9.95

OXFORD PAPERBACKS

Oxford University Press ■ 200 Madison Avenue ■ New York, NY 10016

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

discover community in his personal return to Zion. Professionally, the endeavor was clearly successful, and by the late 1930s he can say to Benjamin with pride, and with ample justification, that a "school of Scholem" has gathered round him in Jerusalem. Politically and spiritually he remained, despite a few like-minded friends, almost as much of a queer duck among the Zionists as Benjamin in the 1930s was among the Marxists.

What both had for compensation—if one can speak in such cases of compensation—was a burning sense of intellectual vocation, which held out to them the embrace of posterity in place of the community of their contemporaries. Benjamin turned 40 in 1932, Scholem reached that age in 1937; and their letters in these years are marked by the feeling that the time had come in both their lives to produce the masterworks of which they knew themselves capable. Since the early 1920s Scholem had been doing the spadework for the modern scholarly investigation of Jewish mysticism, through a series of close textual studies and specialized monographs. Now, he told Benjamin on June 28, 1935, he was prepared to undertake a "fairly voluminous . . . stocktaking" of these 15 years of labor. "There'll be no lack of amazing and very amazing things," he wrote jauntily, "and the historical observer is guaranteed to get his money's worth." Six years later, through the unexpected mediation of the series of lectures he had been invited to present in New York in 1938, the stocktaking appeared as *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, one of the great modern works of the historical imagination. It was dedicated to the memory of Walter Benjamin.

In his reply to the letter that announced the project that became *Major Trends*, Benjamin offered Scholem a tantalizing prospectus of the book he first called *Passagen* ("Parisian Arcades") and then *Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century*: "The work represents both the philosophical application of surrealism—and thereby its sublation [*Aufhebung*]—as well as the attempt to retain the image of history in the most inconspicuous corners of existence—the detritus of history, as it were." What Benjamin meant by this gnomic formulation may perhaps be inferred from the fragments of *Passagen* that he actually wrote, from his essay of 1939 on Baudelaire.

In that remarkable essay, the argument often proceeds through a movement of free association, like surrealist poetry. Thus, the frenetic Parisian crowd in Baudelaire's poems carries Benjamin to the carnival mob in the paintings of James Ensor, to the brutal alliance of police and looters in totalitarian states, to the invention of the match, of snapshot photography, and of the cinema, whereby "the human sensorium [is] subjected to a complex training . . . of perception in the form of shocks." As we are swept from Baudelaire's poetry to the broad forces and the odd minutiae of modern history, surrealist free association is "sublated"—negated, heightened, and sustained—because it is made the vehicle of a rigorous historical-philosophical analysis. The project was powerfully original. Given the harried conditions of Benjamin's existence and the anguished oscillations of his inner life, it is not surprising that it was never realized.

Unlike Scholem, Benjamin was sometimes troubled by doubts about whether he would ever have an audience, whether there was any point in writing. "What will we leave behind someday," he observes gloomily toward the end, on February 4, 1939, "other than our own writings with their uncut pages?" But at the beginning of his last letter to Scholem, written from Occupied France on January 11, 1940, he urges his friend to publish his New York lectures as soon as possible: "Every line we succeed in publishing today—no matter how uncertain the future to which we entrust it—is a victory wrenched from the powers of darkness."

The exhortation is no empty rhetorical gesture. Writing like theirs was an unflinching effort to grasp the complex dialectical nature (a favored term of Scholem, sans materialism) of historical reality, to define the wonderful architectonic structures that man's imagination erects over, against, or upon the abyss of mortality and the dissolution of value that underlies human existence. At a moment when the simplifications of totalitarian ideology had displaced historical realities with schematic lies used as the warrant for a program of annihilation, the intellectual enterprises of Scholem and Benjamin were an act of cultural resistance, the delicate sustaining of precisely the legacy that totalitarianism hoped to wipe out forever.

There was one modern writer, arguably the greatest of the 20th-century architects of the abyss, who spoke profoundly to the spiritual condition shared by Benjamin and Scholem. A decade older than either of them, Franz Kafka was the lonely pioneer of a whole generation of modernist intellectuals, at least in the German-speaking sphere, though he surely aspired to found no school. He also marked the crucial point of intersection of Scholem's and Benjamin's interests.

A rigorously iconoclastic modernist in the medium of fiction, Kafka embodied the new poetics of disjuncture, discontinuity, and purposeful perplexity that fascinated Benjamin. A writer hyperconscious of the categories of a Jewish tradition that had lost its authority, Kafka exposed both the power and the atrophy of tradition and theological authority that preoccupied Scholem and Benjamin. Scholem was strongly inclined to see Kafka, moreover, as a latter-day kabbalist, exhibiting deep kinship with some of the esoteric figures he had studied as a historian; he broached the notion to Benjamin and spelled it out much later in his "Ten Unhistorical Theses on the Kabbalah."

Benjamin and Scholem express their avid admiration for Kafka in their correspondence as early as the late 1920s, when it was difficult to locate any of his works in the bookstores. In the correspondence from 1933 onward, they constantly return to the subject of Kafka. The illuminating comments on both sides are climaxed by the extraordinary essay-length letter on Kafka that Benjamin sent to Scholem in New York on June 12, 1938. One of his most arresting contributions to the criticism of modern literature, he hoped Scholem would show it to the publisher Salman Schocken and help him get a generous contract for a book; but it also remains an intimate communication to a friend about a topic that mattered deeply to both of them.

The discussions of Kafka in the correspondence are accompanied by the shadowy presence, occasionally evoked explicitly, of a kind of literary twin whose contours may not be clear to the ordinary Western reader. Scholem had become friendly with S. Y. Agnon, the writer who was to become the one major Hebrew modernist, in the course of Agnon's extended stay in Germany during and after World War I. They both made the move to Jerusalem around the same time, and remained lifelong friends. Benjamin met Agnon through Scholem in 1920 and became a keen admirer. Reading Agnon's stories in German translations (a few of them done by Scholem), he was convinced that Agnon was one of the masters of contemporary fiction, and looked forward eagerly to every scrap of his work that became available in German. Some understanding of the subterranean connections Benjamin and Scholem intuited between the two writers may throw light on the evolving perception they shared of Kafka as the post-traditional Jewish writer who mapped out, above

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

all others, the spiritual territory of the modern condition.

Benjamin and Scholem shared the perception that there was a deep, imaginative kinship between Agnon and Kafka. Scholem, in a brief observation in the *Jüdische Rundschau* in 1928, had broached the idea that Agnon's fiction worked out a revision of Kafka's *Trial*: both drew an apocalyptic sense of reality from their powerful realization of a child's vision, but Agnon's fiction managed to hold out a possibility of redemption. In conversation, at least half-seriously, the two friends raised the possibility of Benjamin's writing a comparative essay on Agnon and Kafka. On January 18, 1934, Benjamin appears to propose (at any rate, according to Scholem's construal of this sentence) that Scholem undertake this task instead of him: "Agnon displays mastery in every piece, and if I had become 'a teacher in Israel'—but I could have just as easily become an ant lion—I would not have been able to refrain from a lecture on Agnon and Kafka."

In Hebrew criticism after the 1950s, comparisons between Agnon and Kafka became commonplace. At least on the surface, however, Kafka and the early Agnon look like polar opposites. Agnon was the product of a highly literate Orthodox home in a middle-sized Galician town. The keen interest that he later developed in German and European culture, which he generally camouflaged in his fiction, was always that of the autodidact and the outsider. He wrote in a flagrantly archaizing Hebrew, steeped in the associations and values of three millennia of tradition, worlds away from the limpid German deliberately sealed off from the historical resonances of the language that Kafka fashioned for his fiction.

Most crucially, the bulk of Agnon's fiction in his first quarter century as a writer (his earliest stories were published around 1905) seemed to be ventriloquistic performances of the voices of Jewish tradition—tales of Torah scribes, yeshiva students, unworldly pious talmudists, craftsmen of synagogue art, suffused with intricate lore of a vanishing world of faith. These artful redeployments of traditional storytelling show no obvious family resemblance to "The Judgment," *The Trial*, "The Metamorphosis," "In the Penal Colony."

Agnon had also written some stories and novellas of a Flaubertian cast, enacted in modern settings, and in 1935 he published his psychological masterpiece, *A Simple Story*, but these were not available to Benjamin in translation. And at the very moment that Benjamin was writing Scholem about the temptation to produce an essay on Agnon and Kafka, the Hebrew writer had in fact begun to publish a series of disjunct, dreamlike, "Kafkaesque" stories (he always vehemently denied any influence) that he later put together as *The Book of Deeds*, but Benjamin probably did not know of their existence.

In the letter of January 18, 1934, Benjamin is gratefully responding to a small volume of Agnon's stories in German translation that Scholem had sent him. He singles out one piece in particular: "I have yet to find anything more beautiful in his works than 'The Great Synagogue,' which I regard as a tremendous masterpiece." At first glance, it is puzzling that this two-and-a-half-page tale (never translated into English) of the discovery of a buried synagogue by playing schoolchildren should have made such a profound impression on the critic who celebrated the modernist tensions of Kafka, Proust, Brecht, and the Surrealists. But the complications in its seemingly naive recuperation of the harmonies of pious tradition may tell us something about the Kafka whom Benjamin defined as a creator of an *Aggadah* (lore) without a *Halakhah* (law), and whom Scholem characterized as the proponent of a secular, heretical kabbalah.

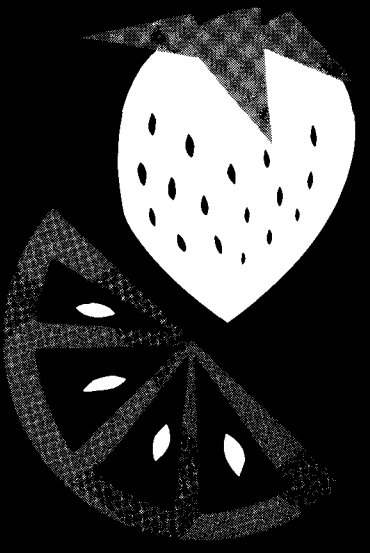
The bare plot outline of "The Great Synagogue" suggests a simple, perhaps nostalgic parable of the recovery of the spiritual glories of the past—a shimmering dream, it should be noted, that never ceased, in all its impossibility, to have an allure for Benjamin, even at the height of his Marxist phase. The children, digging on a mountainside where they are playing a messianic game of pretending to rebuild the ancient Temple, discover shingles buried in the soil. It soon becomes clear that there is a whole roof just below the surface of the ground.

The community undertakes a major excavation, and when it is completed, the Great Synagogue of the town of Jaslowitz stands revealed in all its antique splendor—a structure whose very existence had been no more than a bare inference from certain geographical indications in old Hebrew responsa. This resurgence of the pious past is accompanied by a miraculous event. When the whole building is unearthed, the door is found to be locked, and no locksmith's tool can budge it. Then a voice is heard from within chanting, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob," the first words of the morning service, and the portal swings open.

Benjamin must have admired the understated beauty with which this vision of recovery is conveyed, but I suspect he

"I've read this remarkable book for *my* kids' sake. I hope you'll read it for yours."

—MERYL STREEP



FOR OUR KIDS' SAKE

How to Protect Your Child Against Pesticides in Food

By Anne Witte Garland

Foreword by
T. Berry Brazelton, M.D.

Natural Resources Defense Council

"Let's all turn our anger and our helplessness into action to protect our children and to institute practices and controls that will clean up our children's food."
—T. Berry Brazelton, M.D.

SIERRA CLUB BOOKS

At your bookstore or direct from Sierra Club Store, 730 Polk Street, San Francisco, CA 94109. Please enclose $6.95 plus $3.00 postage and handling. California residents please add applicable sales tax. Telephone orders (VISA & MC): 415 923 5500.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was also impressed by other, countervailing lines of force in the story. The schoolchildren are clearly not a realistic representation of Galician *heder* kids, but a flagrantly fanciful ideal projection. The games they play are straight out of the Bible and the Mishnah; they undertake their rebuilding of the Temple the day after the fast of Tisha B'Av that commemorates the Temple's destruction, singing, as they dabble in the mud, the Passover hymn that begins, "The Almighty will soon rebuild his house."

The Great Synagogue itself, moreover, is confused in the story with two antithetical structures. When only the roof has been uncovered, people think it may be the castle in which a local lord is said to have shut up all his wife's lovers, leaving them to perish by asphyxiation. Then, as stained-glass windows are revealed, the building is thought to be an old church, and the Jews are temporarily banished from the excavation. Thus, before the full emergence of the house of prayer, its site is marked in public surmise by murder, promiscuity, and an alien cult (the three cardinal crimes in rabbinic law). Finally, the Great Synagogue, freed from its casement of earth, is seen resplendent as in days of yore: "And as the August sun shone on the stained-glass windows, everyone was suffused with their light. Ancient days—ancient sanctuaries."

But the final note of the tale marks Agnon's perspective as a contemporary of Benjamin, and of Kafka. The old ark and its Torah scrolls have been perfectly preserved: "And twin carved doves spread their wings, the wings of the dove covered with silver, and a great prayer book was set on the lectern, a prayer book written in lovely script on deerskin. Everything was in its place, intact. Only the Eternal Light was on the point of going out." The laconic, artful ambiguity of the last sentence is quintessential Agnon. Another miracle, the Eternal Light has continued burning underground through the years. The term used for "going out" also refers to the setting of the sun; and so this final image oddly undercuts the previous image of the synagogue refulgent with sunlight. (There is probably a biblical resonance; the "lamp of God" has "not yet gone out" when young Samuel is called in the night by God in I Samuel 3.) An optimistic reader might infer that the Great Synagogue has been recovered just in time to replenish the Eternal Light before it gutters. Another inference, perhaps more likely, is that the Eternal Light is itself about to go out: the wondrous renewal of the past presents a soul-stirring spectacle, but it comes too late in the history of faith and culture. The return can no longer take place.

"The Great Synagogue," like most of the ostensibly traditionalist stories of the early Agnon, reveals not a reversal of the process of judgment in Kafka, as Scholem contended in 1928, but its inexorable working out in the guise of tradition. To put this a little differently, in Agnon the theological enchantment of the world of piety is elaborately and lovingly evoked at the same time that it is ironically subverted from within. Kafka's case is the obverse. His gray fictional landscapes of pathetic animals and petty bureaucrats have been ruthlessly shorn of all the outward trappings of tradition, but the classic Jewish triad of revelation, law, and commandment virtually defines his imaginative world, whose protagonists cannot do without these categories and yet cannot understand them, tolerate them, live by them.

Over the years, despite vehement differences on particular issues of definition, this is a perception about Kafka that Benjamin and Scholem shared, grasping the full range of its implications, I think, better than any other of Kafka's critics. They disagreed strenuously, for example, about whether revelation was absent from Kafka's world, as Benjamin had intimated in his 1934 essay on Kafka, or whether it was present but impossible to fulfill, as Scholem, recalling the more nihilistic manifestations of the Kabbalah, argued in his letter of July 17, 1934. What is remarkable about these exchanges on Kafka, which continued down to the last year of their correspondence, is that the two men, even in partial difference, are able to carry out a process of collaborative thinking, the perspectives of Benjamin, the metaphysician without a tradition, and of Scholem, the historian of a mystical countertradition, beautifully complementing each other.

The first extended communication between the two on Kafka is a letter that Scholem wrote, in response to an invitation from Benjamin to share his ideas on the author of *The Trial*, on August 1, 1931. (The letter does not appear in the published correspondence, but it was preserved among Benjamin's notes on Kafka, and Scholem reproduces it in *Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship*.) Both friends had a tendency to think about Kafka in metaphysically weighted aphorisms. In this initial document, Scholem worries away at what he calls "the theological secret of perfect prose" in Kafka. The perfection of prose is, I believe, an important dimension of the affinity between Kafka and Agnon, though they went about the pursuit of stylistic perfection in opposite ways, Agnon fashioning a classical Hebrew redolent of the foundational texts of the early rabbis. Both writers, interestingly, were inspired by the exacting standards of the prose of Flaubert.

Still, the effect that both achieved was very different from that of the French writer. In Flaubert's novels, the painstakingly wrought prose is the supreme expression of a purely aesthetic impulse, the magisterial mark of the artificer on his verbal artifice. In Kafka, and in Agnon, as Scholem recognized in his 1931 letter, the perfect prose is an assertion of the voice of authoritative tradition in a world that offers no purchase for such authority: "Kafka's linguistic world, . . . with its affinity to the Last Judgment, probably represents the prosaic in its most canonical form." Two years later, in a poem on Benjamin's autobiographical *One-Way Street*, Scholem reflected: "In the old days all roads led / To God and his name, somehow. / We are not pious. [*Wir sind nicht fromm.*] / We remain in the Profane. / And where God once stood now stands: Melancholy." For both of them, Kafka was the writer who gazed unblinking into the heart of this melancholy, but at the same time could not help seeing the ghostly lineaments of the landscape of the old days.

Benjamin, for his part, picks up the notion of "the prosaic in its most canonical form" and links it with the specific narrative and exegetical literary forms of religious tradition. "It is in the attempt to metamorphize life into Scripture that I perceive the meaning of 'reversal' [*Umkehr*], which so many of Kafka's parables endeavor to bring about" (August 11, 1934). He elaborates the implications of this insight about the ambiguous weight of tradition in Kafka's work four years later in the essay-letter: "Kafka eavesdropped on tradition, and he who listens hard does not see." The image is brilliantly chosen, not only because it conveys so effectively Kafka's relation to tradition, but also because in fact many of Kafka's protagonists become eavesdroppers (or peeping Toms), straining at cracks and crevices to cull a garbled and imperfect version of things that perhaps are not even being said. In all this, Benjamin goes on to say, the "consistency of truth . . . has been lost."

Other modern imaginations have come to the same sad recognition, but their typical response, according to Benjamin, has been to cling to some fragment of what they want to regard as truth, regretfully conceding that it may no longer have the coherence or authority to make it transmissible. Kafka's project was more radical. "Kafka's real ge-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nius was that he tried something entirely new: he sacrificed truth for the sake of clinging to transmissibility, to its aggadic element." This central notion opens several main corridors in the haunted house of fiction that Kafka built: the sense floating through the stories, parables, and novels of a "rumor about the true things (a sort of theology passed on by whispers)"; the pervasiveness of folly oddly conjoined with what sometimes look like angelic presences; the restless operation of exegesis in virtually all aspects of the narratives; the paradox of Kafka's "radiant serenity" in shaping a fictional world that often seems to invite madness or despair.

The great letter of June 1938 was a crystallization of what the two men had been thinking together about Kafka over the previous seven years, but it was not the end of the discussion. Scholem, as we have seen, was not entirely happy with all of Benjamin's emphases, though he encouraged him, in November 1938, to develop his most important insight: "If you were to succeed in representing the borderline case of wisdom, which Kafka does indeed represent, as the crisis of the sheer transmissibility of the truth, you would have achieved something absolutely magnificent." A few months later, in February 1939, Benjamin is turning over a new idea—that humor is the ultimate secret of Kafka's tradition-obsessed modernist fiction. He is inclined to put this as a challenge to his friend, just as Scholem had proposed a challenge to him: "I think the key to Kafka's work is likely to fall into the hands of the person who *is able to extract the comic aspects of Jewish theology*. Has there been such a man? Or would you be man enough to be that man?" (emphasis Benjamin's).

While this long conversation on Kafka continues, the world is going to pieces, though only occasionally do they talk about it directly in their letters. Behind their discussions loom the Arab uprising, the British Mandate's closing down of Jewish immigration to Palestine, the inauguration of the concentration camp universe (to which both Scholem's brother and Benjamin's were taken soon after Hitler came to power), Kristallnacht, and finally, the beginning of the long-dreaded war. Against this grim background, the Kafka exchange epitomizes what is most humanly impressive about this correspondence.

These friends were not scraping on a private fiddle as Rome, Jerusalem, Paris, and Berlin threaten to burn. Much is at stake for them in trying to make sense of Kafka. In their larger intellectual projects, neither was directly concerned with the nature of totalitarianism, as their mutual friend Hannah Arendt was to be, but both saw the new century as an era in which the old sustaining structures of belief, value, and community had been shattered. Benjamin traced this process back to the twin implosive forces of industrialization and urbanization in the 19th century; Scholem, following the internal lines of Jewish history, saw a great paradigm for the disruptive transition to modernity in the messianic upheavals of the 17th century and their radically antinomian aftermath. Neither man could conceive of humanity making its way through the wilderness of existence without the guide of a metaphysical compass, for each assumed that what made us human was our capacity to live in a community that shared wisdom, conscious of our relation to ultimate realities.

Kafka's authority for them, then, was paradoxical, and it lay in his ability to embrace without flinching the contradictions of this whole painful historical dislocation. He refuses to sever himself from the world of origins anchored in belief, but he is not for a moment deceived about its momentous decline. Kafka re-enacts the gestures of tradition, transmogrified, in a kind of perverse reverence, without either spoofing tradition or being piously sentimental about it. From the center of dread he plucks the possibility of humor; and as Benjamin intimated just before the end, hoping Scholem would see some analogue in the esoteric annals of Jewish mysticism, humor might yet become the fun-house mirror in which to glimpse one of the elusive faces of God.

Perhaps Kafka himself, as he suggested more than once in his diaries and his letters, was trying to achieve more than a human imagination could. Benjamin and Scholem, with their extraordinary minds, strained to catch the spiritual aim of Kafka's trying. It still seems urgent enough a task to have undertaken as the world trembled beneath the shadow of destruction.

ROBERT ALTER is Class of 1937 Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of California, Berkeley, and the author most recently of *The Pleasures of Reading in an Ideological Age* (Simon and Schuster).

Dog Days

BY RICHARD JENKYNS

Ackerley: The Life of J. R. Ackerley by Peter Parker

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 465 pp., $25)

When J. R. Ackerley died in 1967, there was a mild elegiac flutter in the obituary columns. Joe, as his friends called him, was well known as a minor figure in the London literary world. He had been an outstanding literary editor of the BBC's weekly magazine *The Listener*. In the 1920s he had written a play that ran briefly in a fringe theater not far from the West End before being replaced by the aptly named *The Desire for Change*. He had published three slim volumes: a humorous account of a few months spent at the court of an Indian maharajah, and two books based on his life with his pet dog, one of which won a literary prize. Readers were liable to find that these works were rather different from what they had expected, and friends knew that each of them had to be altered to avoid prosecution for libel and obscenity; but few people, perhaps, can have been fully prepared for Ackerley's memoir, *My Father and Myself*, which appeared posthumously in 1968. It revealed one of the queerest life stories of the 20th century.

Ackerley's father, Roger, was a self-made businessman who, with his partner Arthur Stockley, had made money in the banana trade. As in a bad novel, the two partners were almost comically contrasted. Stockley was solid and sober, author of *Consciousness of Effort: the romance of the banana*. Roger Ackerley was a jolly, coarse-grained man with a flair for flamboyant publicity. When the music-hall star Florrie Forde sang "Yes, we have no bananas," he supplied her with bunches of the fruit. When the song "I've never seen a straight banana" became popular, he offered £1,000 to anyone who could find one. (He did not have to pay up.) His son remembered his fondness for dirty jokes, his habit of scratching himself un-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pleasantly, and the way that he would sit in his armchair, reading his paper, "picking his nose abstractedly and rolling the little bit of snot between his thumb and forefinger." This portrait shows us a side of Victorian and Edwardian life often neglected. Not all the wealthy bourgeoisie wanted to adopt the style of the gentry.

In fact, the family was not perfectly respectable. Joe, who specialized in the insouciant telling of outrageous fact, began his memoir, "I was born in 1896 and my parents were married in 1919." An earlier draft began, "My father's penis was twelve inches long." His father's penis was indeed the problem: in addition to his three children by Joe's mother, Roger had another family of three daughters. Though the two families lived only a mile or two apart, Roger managed to keep his secret until his death. This extraordinary story has been told, from the other family's point of view, by Diana Petre, one of Joe's half sisters, in *The Secret Garden of Roger Ackerley*; another of the half sisters became Duchess of Westminster, and Joe found late in life that he was brother-in-law to the richest man in England.

A curious story. But Joe's own life was to be more curious still. For one thing, he was a wildly promiscuous homosexual. It is hard to fathom the cause of this, and Peter Parker, a blessedly sensible and unfussy biographer, does not speculate. After a conventional schooling, Ackerley fought in the trenches and was twice wounded, first by his whiskey bottle, which was shattered by a shell, then in the buttock, where the injury suppurated painfully. In a bad novel both these wounds would be symbolic.

After the war he went to Cambridge, and then joined the talks department of the BBC. The BBC's director-general, Sir John Reith, was every bad novelist's idea of a Calvinist Scot, craggy of face and over six feet tall ("those wuthering heights," Churchill said). Presumably he was not aware that Hilda Matheson, the head of the talks department, and both her assistants were homosexual. The occasion when the three of them produced a radio discussion on marriage between Hilda's lover, Vita Sackville-West, and Vita's homosexual husband, Harold Nicolson, must have been rich in ironies.

Meanwhile Ackerley had become friendly with E. M. Forster. Through Forster he spent a short period in India, in the sinecure post of secretary to the homosexual Maharajah of Chhatarpur. The maharajah was a comic little man with a snub-nosed face like a Pekingese, whose interests were divided between sexual practices too bizarre to be described in the pages of a quiet family magazine like this one and a rather touching desire for self-improvement; life at Chhatarpur reads like a mixture of Evelyn Waugh's *Black Mischief* and Ronald Firbank.

The maharajah was strongly Anglophile, his great ambition being to wangle a knighthood out of King George V. He admired the masterpieces of English fiction—Marie Corelli and Hall Caine—and believed that Westerners had the key to the mysteries of the universe. Did God exist or not? Here was G. H. Lewes who said one thing and Herbert Spencer who said the other; would Ackerley please read both books and tell him who was right. After a few months Ackerley decided that he had enough. The maharajah, already distressed by the news of Miss Corelli's recent demise, was heartbroken. Joe concluded that what he really craved was love and affection. This episode became the subject of Joe's first book, *Hindoo Holiday*.

Back in London, Ackerley moved sideways to *The Listener*, where he made the literary pages lively and sometimes risqué, waging guerrilla warfare against what he saw as the moral and political stuffiness of the BBC's establishment. "Joe came yesterday, very gloomy," Forster told a friend once, "trouble with the new editor and muddle with the new guardsman." That was pretty much the pattern of his life for many years. Parker describes several of his skirmishes with authority, including an occasion when three words had been excised from a piece by Leonard Woolf on the grounds that they cast a slur on the royal family. Woolf was furious with the "under-housemaid snobbery of the BBC" and their "servants' hall standards," oblivious to the grosser snobbery of his own attitude. Bloomsbury was indeed socialism on a private income.

Ackerley had joined the Labour Party, but like some others of the literary left he had a considerable contempt for ordinary people. In the 1920s and 1930s, that was significant: many men of his class and his generation had seen the working classes at close quarters in the trenches, and learned to admire their courage and good humor. No doubt Ackerley's louche way of life encouraged a different view. His adventures were aided by his charm and his strikingly good looks; but he paid most of the men he picked up, and his tastes took him into a twilight world of fugitives, odd coppers, dropouts, and petty criminals. He affected to despise the English middle class, but with no compensatory liking for their social inferiors. In *We Think the World of You*, one of his dog books—technically it is his only novel, though it is really a lightly fictionalized account of his own experiences—the working class is stupid and absurd.

Parker oddly believes that by paying soldiers for sex Ackerley was not exploiting them (would he say the same about Asian bar girls?), and he seems barely to notice that Joe was also in the business of

Literal Lives

Lamb wrote a dissertation on roast pig.
Hogg and Suckling did not. Wordsworth
Was not what you would call an economical writer:
Wilde tamed London. Pater was his literary father.

Pound earned a small but steady income from his writing.
Ping-pong was Tennyson's favorite indoor sport.
No one else had done what Donne did in verse:
Erotic lyrics in a religious idiom, and vice versa.

Racine's roots went deep into France's classical soil.
The Iliad was Homer's first grand slam.
The Spanish Tragedy exemplifies Kyd's mature style.
Swift wrote slowly. Pope pontificated.

Frost wondered whether the world would end in ice.
Moore was less wordy than Longfellow, whose short poems
Are his best. Peacock strutted. Bishop
Preferred Rio to Rome and the Vatican.

Ford couldn't drive a car. Neither, of course, could
Austen. As a child Woolf adored the story of
Little red riding hood. West died in California.
Mann loved women. Hardy endured.

David Lehman

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

corrupting teenagers. But Parker's light touch is generally fitting. Though Ackerley's life was sordid, it was also blackly comic, partly because Ackerley himself made it so through the bleak gaiety with which he described it, partly because he had the habit of blundering into muddles more reminiscent of Feydeau than of homosexual intrigue. (Parker has some farcical stories of stolen trousers and compromising letters retrieved from mailbags.)

Occasionally Ackerley became besotted with his bedfellows. The last of these larger passions was for a man whom Parker calls Freddie (not his real name, though Parker nowhere tells us so). Freddie was a deserter from the army and a part-time burglar. (His partner was a full-time burglar, but Freddie was too feckless to stick to anything, even crime.) Ackerley had a right on his hands, not only with Freddie's hopeless untrustworthiness, but with Freddie's wife, whom he predictably despised, but who seems to have been a gallant young woman coping bravely in grim circumstances. "Women are dangerous," he wrote in *My Dog Tulip*, "especially women of the working class."

He thought of blackmailing her (he had learned that she had a conviction for soliciting), then of murdering her. His plan was to scatter poisoned thumbtacks across her bedroom floor. She would get up in her bare feet, tread on one, and die of tetanus. (It struck him that the pins might kill her infants as well, but with his feelings about children this did not seem a drawback.) He bought some liver and experimented by sticking pins into it and leaving it in a drawer to rot. The plan came to nothing and later he wondered how seriously he had meant it. Still, one feels that Ackerley, like the late King John, was not altogether a good man.

It was through Freddie that he acquired Queenie, his Alsatian dog, and thus began the oddest part of an odd life. He became extravagantly devoted to this animal (which most of his friends found disagreeably bad-tempered), and more or less gave up his pursuit of young men. His description of her is exquisite:

> Her ears are tall and pointed, like the ears of Anubis . . . when she stands with her back to the sun it shines through the delicate tissue, so that they glow shell-pink as though incandescent. . . . Jet . . . are the rims of her amber eyes, as though heavily mascara'd, and the tiny mobile eyebrow tufts that are set like accents above them. . . . Her skull . . . is two primrose pools, the center of her face light gray, . . . her cheeks white, and upon each a *patte de mouche* has been tastefully set.

This is a poem of love, no doubt about it. The novelist Olivia Manning asked him straight out if he had sexual relations with the animal. "Just a little fingerwork," he murmured.

He became enthralled by Queenie's sexual and excretory habits. The outcome was *My Dog Tulip*, in which these topics are handled with a fullness and frankness that make it unlike any other animal book. It also describes his ludicrous attempts to mate her with a pedigree Alsatian. But like her master, she preferred strays, and in the end a mongrel named Dusty fathered her eight puppies, who reduced Ackerley's apartment to more than usual squalor. Queenie led him a dog's life. A particularly absurd episode occurred when he took her with him to stay with Siegfried Sassoon. The two aging inverts made polite conversation during the day, each retiring in the evening to confide his dislike of the other to his diary. During the night Queenie defecated in the bedroom. Ackerley proudly observed how clever she had been in choosing a patch of dark carpet instead of the white pile rug. But her virtue was in vain, since the housemaid trod in the mess, spreading it onto the rug and over half the house.

Scarcely less bizarre was Joe's relationship with his sister Nancy. This appalling and pathetic woman battened on him emotionally. Once beautiful, she declined through idleness, selfishness, and perhaps some mental instability into a boozed, neurotic wreck. Her aim, to get herself permanently installed in Joe's apartment, was finally achieved by an attempt at suicide: he felt he had no choice but to take her in. Nancy and Queenie—the "two bitches"—became furiously jealous of each other's claim on him, and in his darker moments he would amuse himself by stirring things up.

The cocktail of jealousy grew even headier when Joe's Aunt Bunny, a music-hall style of hearty Cockney described as "a character entirely out of fiction," joined the ménage. Bunny became incontinent; Joe advised sanitary towels, which Bunny washed and reused to save money, so that the whole apartment reeked of urine. Bunny died; Queenie grew old and lost control of her bowels. What a stench comes out of that apartment in the course of this book—a festering mess of piss, shit, rotting meat, whiskey, and hatred.

Ackerley's last years were pretty wretched. After Queenie's death, his interest in young men revived, but age made seduction harder. Sitting in a café in Greece, he would wait until he saw a pretty boy, whip in his false teeth, and flash a dazzling smile—a technique that met with small success. Short of money, he wrote to Forster soliciting a gift, and

Call for any book

• Immediate shipment worldwide. • Credit cards or check. • Ask about our overnight gift delivery nationwide. • Free monthly New Title Forecast. • Mail orders welcome. • Open 24 hours every day. • Write or phone for free holiday catalog.

BOOK CALL

1-800-255-2665
In CT or Worldwide (203) 966-5470
59 Elm Street, New Canaan, CT 06840

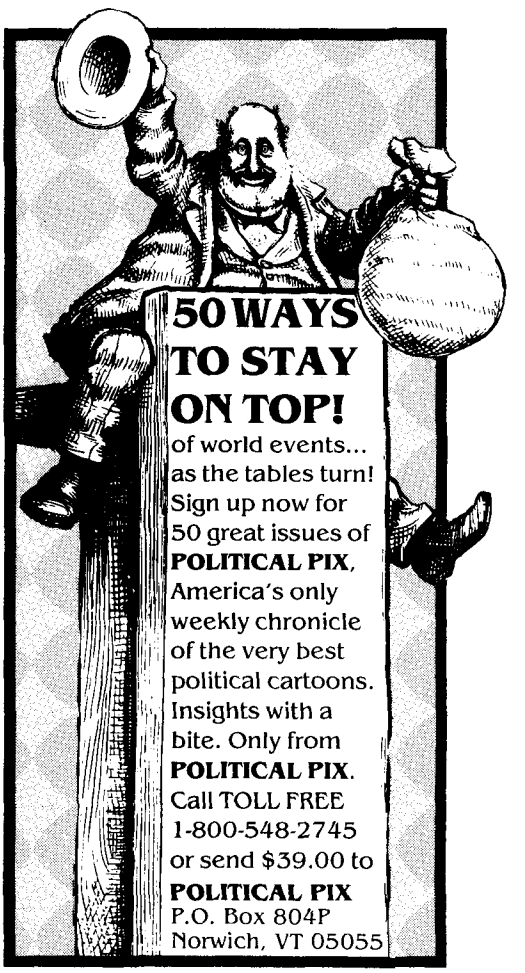
FREE CATALOG

191 Courses in 56 Languages

The world's largest selection of audio and video self-instructional language courses.

Call 1-800-551-7100

AUDIO-FORUM®
THE LANGUAGE SOURCE
Room 1830, 96 Broad Street, Guilford, CT 06437 (203) 453-9794



50 WAYS TO STAY ON TOP!

of world events... as the tables turn! Sign up now for 50 great issues of **POLITICAL PIX**, America's only weekly chronicle of the very best political cartoons. Insights with a bite. Only from **POLITICAL PIX**. Call TOLL FREE 1-800-548-2745 or send $39.00 to **POLITICAL PIX** P.O. Box 804P Norwich, VT 05055

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Forster rather sportingly sent £1,000. Ackerley thought the sum inadequate and dreamed up another wheeze: noticing how frail his benefactor was looking, he wrote his obituary and hawked it round the Sunday newspapers. The money went mainly on whiskey. With scarcely any other pleasures left, he sat waiting for the "dear dark angel" to release him. Death came when he was 70; by a last bitter irony Nancy, whose possessiveness had done so much to spoil his later years, seemed much happier once he was gone.

What was wrong with Ackerley? By his own account he was torn between romantic and erotic impulses: in all the young men he took into his bed he was looking for the "ideal friend," but was eternally frustrated because all the men he liked liked women. Parker accepts this story rather too easily. Many of his friends thought that he was incapable of love, including his half sister Diana, who, perhaps surprisingly, adored him. The pursuit of sex was cold and mechanical: having seen the wretched "slave markets" of Japan, he wrote to Forster, "Not really my cup of sake. Bad breath, I am told, no circumcision." He seems to have forgotten that he is talking about human beings.

Perhaps the more terrible truth is that he has not forgotten: these are only boys, not dogs. In later life he became a zealous, even fanatical advocate of what we would now call animal rights. This would be much to his credit, were it not so plain that his crusade for animals was a reflex of his bitterness against humanity. He hated the middle classes, the working classes, the English, the Americans, women, children; that left him with little to like, animals apart. He seems to have been almost entirely self-absorbed. The reason that his early ambitions to be a playwright or novelist came to nothing was that he could never get beyond himself. All his books are autobiographical.

And it is obvious that he was obsessed with dirt. Like other concerned citizens, he wrote to his local paper about dogs' mess in the streets; unlike most concerned citizens, he wanted more of it. (It was so distressing for the poor creatures even to use the gutter.) He took photographs of Queenie fouling the sidewalks, which he hoped to use in *My Dog Tulip*. He liked to think of Reith and the other heads of the BBC "all with their trousers down, sitting with their pale legs apart, having a GOOD SHIT, and I like it because I know they would not like me to think of it." In part this seems merely retarded; perhaps we should reach for Dr. Freud's casebook after all. But it also suggests that his coprophilia was caught up with his misanthropy. "I think that people *ought* to be upset," he told Stephen Spender, "and if I had a paper I would upset them all the time; I think that life is . . . so upsetting that nobody should be spared." It is as though he wants to rub our faces in—well, you know what.

According to the publishers' blurb, "Ackerley is a 20th-century exemplar of a time-honored English tradition: the odd individualist whose steadfast adherence to his peculiar way of seeing eventually becomes representative." Ah yes, the rich historic tapestry of England: beefeaters and thatched cottages, buggers lurking in public lavatories. Another time-honored English tradition is devoting biographies to even the most minor literary figures. Sometimes it seems that anyone who ever took tea with Virginia Woolf has had his life slapped between hard covers. Parker's book could easily have been a waste of time; unexpectedly, it is a great success.

Parker shares many of Ackerley's own virtues as a writer—coolness, clarity, economy, and wit—and he weaves together the public and private strands of his subject's life with assurance. This is a very funny book, but the humor is macabre: it is a great advertisement for marriage, fidelity, and cats. Misery, squalor, and cruelty are constantly at the edge of our field of vision: Forster plotting to break up the young marriage of a man he fancied; Joe taking pleasure in the unhappiness of Sassoon's estranged wife; Roger's wife and mistress both declining into alcoholic stupor; Nancy's son stranded with a stepmother in America and writing piteous pleas to his uncle for rescue; Nancy herself twisting her life like a screw deeper and deeper into self-willed wretchedness.

Parker plausibly suggests that even jolly Roger was a lonely man at heart, and Joe's own life was surely a joyless thing. But he would have wanted us to laugh; he was always indignant when people failed to see how funny his books were. He seems to have whined a good deal to his friends, but in his writings he bears up with a sort of jaunty, battered stoicism. Perhaps his epitaph should be taken from that other raddled bohemian, Mehitabel the cat: *toujours gai*.

RICHARD JENKYNS is the author of *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Harvard University Press).

The Matter with Style

BY ALFRED KAZIN

Vladimir Nabokov: Selected Letters 1940-1977 by Vladimir Nabokov edited by Dmitri Nabokov and Matthew J. Bruccoli

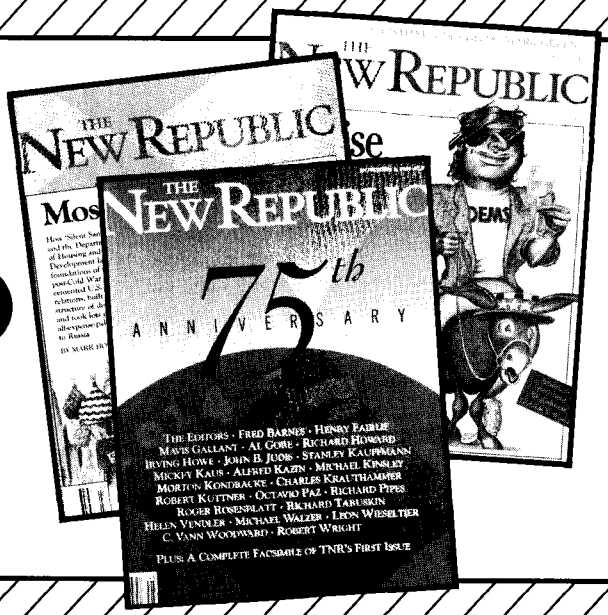
(Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 608 pp., $29.95)

Vladimir Vladimirovitch Nabokov was never shy about admitting it: he was a wonder. As the son of a remarkably liberal jurist and Anglophile at the top of czarist society, he had an extraordinarily privileged and even enchanted youth. His memoirs, especially *Speak, Memory*, wonderfully bring this back.

An avid lepidopterist as a boy, a talented poet privately published by his family when he was 17, he escaped the Leninist dictatorship at 20 and took a degree at Cambridge at 23, then under the pen name "Sirin" became an admired, envied, vaguely disturbing member in Berlin of the Russian literary colony, published novel after novel while also making his living as a tennis coach, chess expert, maker of crossword puzzles in Russian, and translator. (He turned *Alice in Wonderland* into Russian.) In 1937 Nabokov fled Hitler's Germany with his Jewish wife, went to Paris, was esteemed by French writers, then in 1940 made it to New York bearing his first novel in English, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*.

In America he had a part-time position as entomologist at Harvard, taught at Stanford, Wellesley, and most famously at Cornell. He was an ideal teacher, capable of bringing into class a diagram of an old Russian railway carriage to illuminate the opening pages of *Anna Karenina*. He wrote for the *New Yorker*, did a critical biography of Gogol, a painstakingly literal translation (the only kind he believed in) of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* with invaluable notes. *Lolita* (1955), turned down by publishers who said they were doing his reputation a favor, was first issued in English in Paris by Maurice Girodias, a publisher of sexy books whose

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED


THE NEW REPUBLIC
THE NEW REPUBLIC
75th
ANNIVERSARY
THE EDITORS · FRED BARNES · HENRY FAIRLIE
MARIS GALLANT · AL GORE · RICHARD HOWARD
IRVING HOWE · JOHN B. JUDIS · STANLEY KAUFMANN
MICKEY KAUS · ALFRED KAZIN · MICHAEL KINSLEY
MORTON KONDRACKE · CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER
ROBERT KUTTNER · OCTAVIO PAZ · RICHARD PIPES
ROGER ROSENBLATT · RICHARD TARUSKIN
HELEN VENDLER · MICHAEL WALZER · LEON WIESELTIER
C. VANN WOODWARD · ROBERT WRIGHT
PLUS: A COMPLETE FACSIMILE OF TNR'S FIRST ISSUE

SMART GIFT

The nation's hottest journal of politics, ideas and culture, *THE NEW REPUBLIC* makes an enlightening gift.

For someone who shares your quest for intelligent, provocative reading, there's no better way to say "Happy Holidays."

A welcome challenge for curious minds, your gift of *THE NEW REPUBLIC* will compliment your friends . . . and remind them of your thoughtfulness throughout the year.

Your friends will appreciate *THE NEW REPUBLIC* for the same reasons you do. And you'll appreciate our special holiday rates.

SENSATIONAL SAVINGS

$59.97 for the first gift (or your own renewal)

$34.95 for each additional gift—a sensational savings of 42% off the $59.97 basic rate!

Special Holiday Rates!

1-800
74-6350

THE NEW REPUBLIC Gift Subscription Form

GIFT FOR

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

MY NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

❑ Include my own subscription at special holiday rates: ❑ New ❑ Renewal

❑ Payment enclosed. Payment enclosed. ($59.97 for the first gift; all additional gifts $34.95 each.)

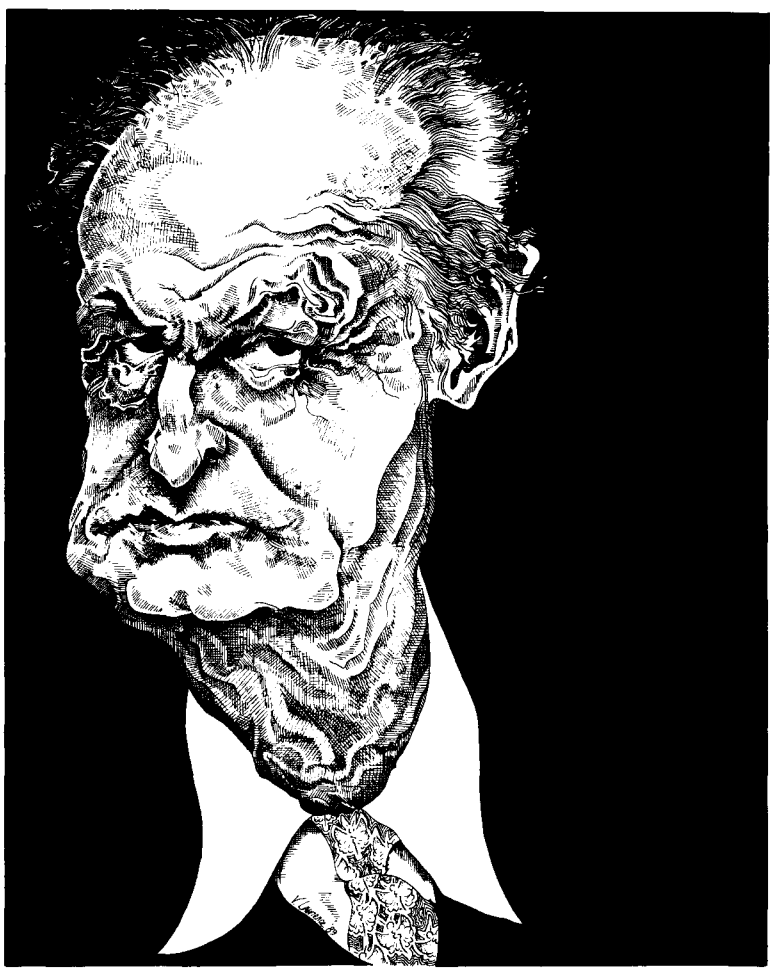
❑ Bill me later. Attractive gift cards will be sent in your name. NEW gifts begin with 1st January issue. Renewed subscriptions take effect after current subscription expires.

MAIL TO: THE NEW REPUBLIC P.O. Box 52333 Boulder, CO 80321-2333 2BND1

LICENSED TO MYE.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

imprint helped to make the novel notorious before it was recognized by American critics at its real worth. Putnam published the book, enabling Nabokov to leave Cornell and to take up residence at the Palace Hotel in Montreux. He died in 1977 in Switzerland.

Nabokov's accomplishments as novelist, poet, translator, literary scholar, and teacher, even his obsession with chess, grew out of Europe's forest of languages, national and religious animosities, a world dominated in every situation by distrust of the deepest and most lasting kind. Nabokov was yanked from his enclosed, luxurious early life (it certainly gave him a taste for luxury in language) to the endless travail of emigration. He triumphed over very great difficulties by a typically Russian and self-confident sense of strategy, by elevating himself into a special kind of exile, imaginative as well as political.



VLADIMIR NABOKOV BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

More than most 20th-century modernist masters, Nabokov exuded an extraordinary sense of his own primacy. While still in the Russian literary colony in Berlin, he made his compatriots uneasy. He once admitted, "I have a bad habit (not really bad, just being coy) of choosing the most difficult path in my literary adventures." To my knowledge, no one in English since Poe has written out of such public pride in his imagination, out of so much contempt for his most talented contemporaries, out of such an aggrieved sense of genius at bay and condemned (here because of the switch back and forth between Russian and English) to being underrated by simpler minds ignorant of the difficulties within and between languages that Nabokov emphasized as his torment, specialty, opportunity, and triumph.

As a personal document, as a revelation of character and literary ambition, Nabokov's letters are intimidating without being interesting—he made such a cult of pride. These are not memorable literary letters, but incidents of battle, so defensive, feisty, haughty, magisterial was Nabokov, so insistent on being recognized at his own valuation. His son Dmitri, footnoting many of these letters, doesn't know why Nabokov as a man has been thought unpleasant, and testifies to his father's warmth and richness of character. What put people off was not Nabokov's personality, but the rich, lush, yet secret and almost underhand quality of his imagination. It could become just too private and self-celebratory.

Nabokov was right to bridle when people compared his ability to write splendidly in English to that of Conrad. Conrad never wrote in Polish! Nabokov wrote from Berlin in the 1930s, "My novels . . . belong to Russia and her literature, and not only style but subject undergoes a horrible bleeding and distortion." But newly arrived in the United States, Nabokov admitted to James Laughlin, the publisher of New Directions, "In Modern Russian literature I occupy the particular position of a novator, of a writer whose work seems to stand totally apart from that of his contemporaries." What this was all about is best communicated by Nabokov's great admirer, the critic Vladislav Khodasevich, who wrote:

> Peculiar to Sirin is the realization, or perhaps only a deeply felt conviction, that the world of literary creativity, the true world of the artist, . . . conjured out of apparent simulacra of the real world, consists in fact of a completely different material. . . . So different that the passage from one world into the other, in whichever direction it is accomplished, is akin to death.

Nabokov *was* an extraordinary writer. But except for a marvel of tenderness like *Pnin*, I rarely want to reread him. The effects he gains are often intensely magnified, properly grotesque, and richly comic, but many of the books tend to suffocate me. The point of view is so rarefied, the subject so much one of obsession. *Lolita*, marvelous, a work of psychological and satiric genius, nevertheless remains in one's mind not a story of love or passion, but of fatality. I know exactly what Nabokov meant when he said that the book had its inception in Europe. A monkey there was taught to draw—and drew the bars of its cage. This in no way annuls Nabokov's conviction that art begins in, and should afford, "aesthetic bliss," or "writing with ecstasy," as John Updike says of Nabokov.

Russians like to say, used to say, of their supreme writers that given their despotisms, the writer can be "another government." His writing banned in the Soviet Union, his heart full of rage and contempt for what was going on there, Nabokov interpreted his absence from Russia as a tribute to his specialness. In the course of time, his aversion to Soviet authoritarianism became an aversion to radicals like Bertrand Russell, Jean-Paul Sartre, even to the Harvard Russian linguist Roman Jakobson, who occasionally visited his old country.

All this is in the letters, but minus Nabokov's literary genius. Nabokov admired Dorothy Parker and other Americans, but he hated Mann, Freud, Faulkner, Eliot, and Pound. The last two were "big fakes," Freud was a "Viennese quack." Maybe Nabokov was right to say that "all my stories are webs of style and none seems at first blush to contain much kinetic matter. . . . For me 'style' *is* matter." I remember reading years ago that Isaac Babel thought

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nabokov didn't have too much to write about. Nabokov would have replied—as he does in these letters—that all these other people were incapable of locating his special quality. "Style" was not window dressing but a category, it was a special attribute of the imagination. In *Ada* he wrote of his hero "Van Veen" (another "VV") apropos of the great man's ecstatic lovemaking up to old age, "Reality lost the quotes it wore like claws—in a world where independent and original minds must cling to things or pull things apart in order to ward off madness or death (which is the supreme madness)."

The swagger of that passage, the grand manner, calls up Nabokov in all his pride and talent. It also helps to explain "the slight uneasiness" that his imaginative world provides to some people. Not only is it rarely our world, it is not a world that conceivably explains or replaces the one we know. But there are many others, perhaps more akin to Nabokov in imagination, who gratefully accept him at his own valuation. That can be bracing to non-believers like myself. In a time thirsty for genius, it brings back a familiar glow.

ALFRED KAZIN's *Our New York* (with David Finn) has just been published by Harper & Row.

Ire Land

BY DENIS DONOGHUE

Ulster: Conflict and Consent by Tom Wilson

(Basil Blackwell, 330 pp., $49.95)

On August 14, 1969, the British government sent the army to Northern Ireland with the intention of imposing the rule of law and order upon that distressful region. Twenty years later, the army is still on active duty there, with no visible hope of success. Since March 4, 1972, Northern Ireland has been governed by the direct rule of the British government. There is no longer a Parliament in Belfast. Tom Wilson's book is ostensibly an academic study of this situation, but in fact it is an essay in propaganda. He is a Unionist, and writes in support of that position.

The propaganda begins with the title of the book. There is no such entity as Ulster. In the dim past there were five provinces in Ireland: Ulster, Munster, Leinster, Meath, and Connaught. In modern times, Meath was assimilated to Leinster. Ulster consists of nine counties: Derry, Antrim, Down, Fermanagh, Tyrone, Armagh, Donegal, Cavan, Monaghan. Omit the last three of these and you have the Six Counties, more formally known as Northern Ireland. Wilson is writing about Northern Ireland, the Six, but he calls that legal entity Ulster, which is an absurd attempt to represent that region as one of the four provinces of the island. He is not alone in this absurdity. Since 1913 Unionists who have set up paramilitary organizations have called themselves the Ulster Volunteer Force. The British army includes the Ulster Defense Regiment. As a policeman in Northern Ireland, my father was a member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. But Ulster and Northern Ireland are not synonymous. There is a difference of three counties, these being part of the Republic of Ireland.

There are 26 counties south of the border, and six north of it. Wilson's theme is Northern Ireland. Not that he has any possessive designs upon Donegal, Cavan, and Monaghan. He is content with the Six, and only wishes that he and his kin could continue to hold them forever. His main claim is that Ireland was never a single, united country; it was the site of local division, of conflicts between one petty master and another. The fact that it is a tiny country—about 300 miles north to south, about 150 east to west—does not mean that its true character is unity, or that it should be united now or in the future. Partition, the division of the country into the Six and the Twenty-Six, was right when it was enforced in 1921, and it is still right.

These arguments are specious. Even if we forget about the distant past and stick to ascertainable facts, it is indisputable that Ireland was legally united—that is, there was no Partition—from January 1, 1801 to June 6, 1921, the day on which King George V opened the new Parliament (Stormont) in Belfast. Nor is there anything sacrosanct about the Six. In 1912, when the British government made yet another attempt (after similar attempts in 1886 and 1893) to give Ireland some degree of autonomy in the form of the Home Rule Bill, the Northern Unionists thought of demanding that the nine counties of Ulster be exempted. When it was noted that the disposition of Catholics and Protestants in those counties would make a permanent majority in favor of Union improbable, the Unionists reduced their demand from nine to six.

Not that the Six constituted a homogeneous region. There were several areas in which Catholics outnumbered Protestants. But it was clear that by carefully gerrymandering the constituencies, it would be relatively easy to secure a permanent majority in favor of Union. If the wishes of local people in every area had been consulted, Northern Ireland would have comprised four counties at most, perhaps only three and a half. But the Unionists knew, and in the event proved, that they could hold power forever in the Six. "A Protestant Parliament for a Protestant people" was the Unionist slogan of triumph, the only fly in that ointment being the existence of a sizable minority of Catholics in the North, many of whom have never given consent to their Protestant masters.

The present phase of "the Troubles," as they are called in Ireland, began in 1968, with a series of marches—mainly by students from Queen's University, Belfast—demanding civil rights for Catholics. These events were met with such ferocity by extreme Unionists that they turned into organized confrontations. Subsequent events, involving the formation of paramilitary groups, Nationalist and Unionist, have often been narrated, and are now common lore. Wilson thinks that the British government should have dealt with the situation in 1969 by abolishing the Stormont Parliament and governing the Six Counties directly and completely from Westminster, by analogy with the status of Scotland or Wales. The merit of this course, he maintains, would have been "political stability": "It would have been firmly established that Ulster was part of Britain and would remain so unless, in some doubtful and distant future, a majority of her people opted decisively for change."

It's not that Wilson is impressed by majority votes. He argues that in 1912 the Unionists, led by Sir Edward Carson, were fully justified in threatening an armed revolt, and in arming the Ulster Voluntary Force—a paramilitary force, totally outside the law—for that exigency; the Unionists, he maintains, were en-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

titled to resort to force, even against the British Crown, to make home rule impossible. He rejects the Anglo-Irish Agreement, signed by Margaret Thatcher and Garret Fitzgerald as heads of two sovereign states, Britain and Ireland, on November 15, 1985. This agreement, he says, "though not acceptable to the majority," was nevertheless imposed on Northern Ireland: for the first time, a "foreign" state was granted the right to intervene, even if in a merely advisory capacity, in the affairs of the North.

One provision of the agreement is that "if in the future a majority of the people of Northern Ireland clearly wish for and formally consent to the establishment of a united Ireland [the British and the Irish governments] will introduce and support in the respective Parliaments legislation to give effect to the wish." Wilson does not accept this provision, or indeed any majority vote that would threaten Unionism. Suppose Catholics in the North were to outnumber the Protestants 50 or 100 years hence, and suppose that a majority of the people in the North indicated their wish to come into a united Ireland: Wilson would still reject the will of the majority. He would reject it, to the point of demanding that the border be redrawn to ensure that the smaller North would for the indefinite future remain in union with Britain. He rejects, therefore, the decision of the British government as embodied in the Anglo-Irish Agreement. "A majority" is not acceptable to him unless it is a Unionist majority. So he envisages the possibility, however distant or hypothetical, that the North might be reduced to three-and-a-half or four counties. No matter; it would still be Unionist.

One of the many problems with Wilson's argument is that it ignores the fact that the Catholic population of the North is scattered throughout the Six Counties—even in Belfast. (West Belfast is a pain in the Unionist neck.) Does he really envisage a British government reneging on the Anglo-Irish Agreement and conspiring with a future Ian Paisley to thwart it? Perhaps he does. But even to ensure Unionist hegemony in four of the six counties, a British government would have to transport thousands of Catholic families and deposit them on the southern side of the border. Wilson must be desperate to contemplate such a time.

But the most telling consequence of his argument—his rejection of a majority vote—is that it serves the rhetoric of the Provisional IRA (Irish Republican Army) just as well as it serves Wilson. If you ignore a majority vote, you can hardly protest when your enemy does the same. There is no point in claiming—what is true—that Padraig Pearse and the other leaders of the Easter Rising in Dublin in 1916 had no mandate from the people. Of course they didn't. Revolutions are not about mandates. If they fail, or if they are squashed, the lack of a mandate doesn't matter. If they succeed, the question of a mandate is easily brushed aside. Many revolutionary leaders, once "terrorists," have been received by Queen Elizabeth at Buckingham Palace.

The fact that the Provisional IRA has no mandate, even from the people it claims to represent, is regularly asserted by Irish and British governments. But the Irish government is in no position to take a high moral stance on this matter, since the Irish state arose from unmandated rebellion, violence, and bloodshed. If Wilson rejects a majority vote that goes against him, he can't claim that he's in a better moral position than the IRA or the Ulster Volunteer Force. He may call such people terrorists, but that particular bit of name-calling has lost much of its force. Jack's terrorist is Jill's freedom fighter.

So where are we? For the present, and probably for many years to come, a majority of the people in Northern Ireland want to stay in union with Britain. Some of them might like to see the Stormont Parliament restored and a certain measure of devolved government for the North, but in the meantime they are content with direct rule from Westminster. There is much evidence that most people in Britain wish to disengage themselves from Northern Ireland and to bring the army home. The British Labour Party has committed itself to supporting the achievement of Irish unity. No Conservative government, however, would be willing to go further toward that end than Thatcher went in the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Northern Ireland is no longer of any strategic use to Britain; economically and financially the region is only a nuisance, totally dependent on Britain for special financial treatment. Many of the North's 19th-century industries, such as linen and shipbuilding, are defunct, and in many towns the rate of unemployment is dire. There was a time when the social services provided by Westminster for the North were better than those in the South, but now the difference is negligible.

But there are many imponderables, and a few ponderables, in the situation. Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution of 1937, introduced by Eamon De Valera, speak of Ireland as the entire island, and express a clear aspiration to see the unity of the country re-established, the whole country as a sovereign nation. Those articles have never been repealed. Presumably no Irish government since 1937 has thought that a referendum in favor of repealing them would pass. On the other hand, many people in the South, technically Nationalist, are so weary of the North that they have lost their zeal for unity: they feel that the North is alien territory, the badlands of the island.

They also recognize, more clearly than the British military and administrative authorities do, that the IRA can't be defeated. Assuming that enough money continues to come to the IRA from Irish-American zealots, and that there is no difficulty in buying Kalashnikovs, and that the tribal distrust between Catholics and Protestants in the North persists, then the IRA, who are thought to number only a few hundred active soldiers, can keep the British army, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and the Ulster Defense Regiment pinned down indefinitely. A guerrilla war favors the guerrillas, provided there is enough tribal support in the community behind them, as there still is, in Catholic areas. There is no reason why this war should not go on forever.

Thatcher insists that the "security forces" will win, especially if the Irish government locks up its side of the border, presumably by stationing soldiers along the straggling perimeter from Newry to Derry. The only reason that she signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement was so that she could demand that the Irish government seal off the border as if it were the Berlin Wall. But if her own army can't control the streets of Belfast, she can't expect the tiny Irish army to man a border that straggles across cow paths, hedges, and lanes from Down to Donegal. Besides, the IRA has shown that it can strike against the British army anywhere, not only in Belfast, but in England, Gibraltar, and Germany.

It is pointless to speak of the "problem" of Northern Ireland if a problem implies a solution. There is no solution. Instead, there is a situation—a situation about which, as the history of the past 68 years has shown, little can be done. Peter Brooke, the new secretary of state for Northern Ireland, has acknowledged that the IRA can't be defeated by the British security forces. If the IRA were to declare an interest in making peace, the British government would have to talk to Sinn Féin, the political wing of the IRA. But what would they talk about? The British government can't satisfy both the IRA and the Unionists. Ian Paisley, James Molyneaux, and the Unionists they represent are enraged that Brooke would even think of talking to Sinn Féin. Meanwhile the Irish government, led by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Charles J. Haughey, seems content to look after the interests of the Catholics in Northern Ireland, through the Anglo-Irish Agreement, without pursuing the incorrigible question of a united Ireland.

As David Fitzpatrick writes in the recently published *Oxford Illustrated History of Ireland*:

> The outbreak of armed conflict between Northern Catholics and Protestants marked the failure of partition. We have seen that partition created two states whose legitimacy was long denied by substantial minorities and whose survival was secured through initial repression. Each state confounded the prediction of the other that it would prove incapable of averting economic, social, or political breakdown. The Troubles have belatedly demonstrated the futility of a constitutional "settlement" which left the Catholic third of Northern Ireland's population to fend for itself in a state whose rulers regarded Catholics rather as Joshua and the chosen people regarded the unfortunate inhabitants of Jericho. No doubt more sensitive and skillful government might have averted the translation of disaffection into violence; yet it is difficult even with hindsight to propose an alternative settlement capable of eradicating the underlying disaffection.

That is a fair assessment. Another is that "it seems history is to blame," as Haines says to Stephen Dedalus and Buck Mulligan in *Ulysses*.

Tom Wilson's *Ulster* has no "solution" to propose. It is a serious, thoughtful book, and it has the merit of indicating what precisely the Unionists want. They want things to be as they once were. Wilson, Paisley, and Molyneaux are likely to be disappointed, but they, too, like the IRA, cannot be merely brushed aside. It is just barely possible that a future British government might say to the Unionists: "Look here, we have had enough of Ireland, we want to get rid of the whole mess. Your best wisdom is to come to terms with Dublin and dismantle the border. We'll give you ten years in which to reconcile yourselves to that destiny." I gather from Wilson's book that the Unionists would reject that counsel, and prepare to pull up the drawbridge. The rest is anyone's guess. Meanwhile life in the North goes on, in some fashion.

DENIS DONOGHUE has completed *Warrenpoint*, a memoir of his early life in a small town in Northern Ireland.

Last Exit to Queens

BY PEARL K. BELL

The Other Side by Mary Gordon

(Viking, 386 pp., $19.95)

Young writers do not as a rule take commanding possession of a literary world, religious or social, with a first novel. Their fictional property rights, so to speak, need to be confirmed in a continuing body of work. But when Mary Gordon published her first novel, *Final Payments*, at the age of 29, it was acclaimed not only for the dazzling intensity of her prose, but for the indisputable authority of her portrayal of the Irish-Catholic working class in Queens, that least urban and most provincial of the New York City boroughs. With that single novel she established her dominion as a writer in the time and the place she knew best.

There have been relatively few Catholic writers in the United States. The Protestant culture found its literary landscape in the small towns and rural regions of America, while Jewish writers in the last 40 years have dominated the urban scene. Most of the novelists born into Catholic families, like John O'Hara and F. Scott Fitzgerald, had no interest in writing about their religion. Except for J. F. Powers, who has portrayed the everyday life of parish priests in the Midwest with wry sympathy, no significant name comes to mind. (There are popular novelists like James Carroll and Andrew Greeley, but their work is entertainment, not art. Does anyone read James T. Farrell anymore?)

Nor are there many women who write as Catholics. In the South, Flannery O'Connor, a devout believer, envisioned the timeless mysteries of God and the Devil in grotesque and violent forms. But in Mary McCarthy's brittle novels about urban intellectuals, there's scarcely a hint of religion of any persuasion, and the very title of her autobiographical *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* indicated that her ties to the Church were among the "childish things" she put away, not exactly in the spirit of St. Paul, when she grew up.

In her first two books, Gordon dealt with the conflicts that all young people experience in coming of age, though her particular terrain was Irish Catholic Queens. *Final Payments* and *The Company of Women* were abundantly rich in detail about Catholic ritual, custom, and belief, the kind of intimate knowledge only a cradle Catholic can possess. Yet each novel was a kind of bildungsroman. Each described a mettlesome young woman who slowly and painfully realizes that only by rejecting the repressive interdictions of the Church can she be free to enjoy "the rewards of a reasonable life."

In *Final Payments*, Isabel Moore has sacrificed a precious decade of youth to the care of an invalid father, a man whose faith is so unyielding and austere that he believes "the refusal of anyone in the 20th century to become part of the Catholic Church was not pitiable; it was malicious and willful." Even after she is released from filial bondage by her father's death, Isabel does not question her certainty that "what I came from was far more compelling than what I was." After a brief fling with a married man, she scuttles back to her cocoon of piety, and the specious purity of self-abnegation, to atone for her transgression. We are told that in time Isabel finds the courage to liberate herself, sexually and otherwise; but exactly how and why she managed this about-face remains unclear.

Of course such dramatically abrupt changes of heart and mind are a stock feature of coming-of-age novels, and Gordon did not resist their tidy appeal. What redeemed *Final Payments* from banality and predictability, however, was its descriptive eloquence and its metaphoric freshness. Though it seemed obvious that Gordon conceived her heroine's pursuit of "ordinary human happiness" in terms of worldly feminism, she emphatically declared in an interview that "I have a real religious life in a framework which I think of as Catholic."

Is it possible to be both a devout Catholic and a radical feminist? To someone who is neither it sounds, I confess, like an oxymoron. Feminists within the Church want to lift the ban on the ordination of women because they feel they deserve a share of hierarchical power. Yet their commitment to the Roman faith remains intact. They would not assent for a moment to the inimical judgment of divinity expressed by Felicitas, the young rebel in *The Company of Women*, who smugly announces at the end of the book that she has hardened her heart against God: "I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

will not accept the blandishments of the religious life; I will not look to God for comfort, or for succor, or for sweetness. God will have to meet me on the high ground of reason, and there he's a poor contender." How Flannery O'Connor would have shuddered at this self-righteous blasphemy.

There is ambivalence, there is confusion, at the heart of this second novel, and Gordon seemed unable, or unwilling, to deal with it. The conservative priest Father Cyprian has pinned his highest hopes on the child Felicitas. If she abides by his counsel, she will attain the spiritual purity that in his view is increasingly defiled in the modern world. But she cruelly rejects his dream, enrolls at Columbia rather than a Catholic college, has an affair with a dopey radical professor (heavy-handedly caricatured), becomes pregnant, and bears an illegitimate child. Cyprian is crushed by her rebellion. Still, even though Gordon obviously sees him as a representative of the old, intransigent, pre-Vatican II order of the Church, he is the most compelling and complex character in the novel. In the end, the anguished old priest has more profound moral weight, is more credibly human, than the arrogantly self-satisfied heroine.

Perhaps it was Gordon's inability to resolve the emotional tug-of-war between sanctity and emancipation that accounts for the absence of Catholicism from her third novel, *Men and Angels*, in which religion takes the menacing form of non-denominational lunacy. Anne Foster, a supposedly intelligent and sensitive woman, much given to tiresome rumination about the precariousness of human existence, has entrusted her children to a live-in baby sitter who's more than a little peculiar. We know it will all end horribly because Gordon spins out the demented girl's lurid fantasies about the Spirit of Vengeance and the Chosen of the Lord at tedious length, but exactly what this character is supposed to illustrate is hard to grasp.

If Gordon is trying to say that any form of religious fanaticism is a kind of madness, she doesn't convey this judgment persuasively. And if she means the novel to be a celebration of motherhood, Anne is too deplorably lacking in the common sense a mother must have to protect her children from danger. Gordon couldn't make up her mind, it seems, about any of the questions she raised in *Men and Angels*, and the result was a weak and muddled book lacking all conviction.

Gordon's new novel, *The Other Side* (as the Irish of Ireland called the beckoning land across the sea), is her most ambitious work so far, and it brings her back to where she started, to the Irish Catholics of Queens. Instead of a bravely independent young woman straining against the repressive leash of the Church, Gordon has expanded her sights to encompass five generations of a large family, each unhappy in its own fashion.

Shuttling restlessly between past and present, between the bogs of Ireland and the streets of New York, the story is framed by the events of one day in the summer of 1985, when the entire clan has gathered in Queens to await the homecoming of the patriarch, 88-year-old Vincent MacNamara. For months he has been recuperating in a nursing home from a broken hip. In the arresting episode that begins the family saga, we learn how he was injured: his 90-year-old wife, Ellen, battered by years of strokes, knocked him down in a sudden access of wild rage, and wandered out of the house in her nightgown. In the ensuing months she has become almost completely insensible, but she is fitfully tormented by memories of the past that whirl through her ruined head like the bits of colored glass in a kaleidoscope.

Indeed, anger has been Ellen's lifeblood since childhood, the agitated sinews of her being, and even on her deathbed she can still cry out curses that terrify the family. In a bravura passage, Gordon summons up the soul of this difficult woman with majestic dread:

> Within the nearly visible skull, the brain, disintegrating fast, reaches back past houses, curtains, out to ships and over oceans, down to the sea's bottom, back, down, to the bog's soaked floor, to mud, then to the oozing beds of ancient ill will, prehistoric rage, vengeance, punishment in blood.

Neither time nor her husband's long-suffering devotion has pacified Ellen MacNamara, who has been raging against the ways of God and man through most of her 90 years. As a girl in Ireland she despised the priests, and hated her father for transforming her beautiful mother into a gibbering imbecile. Now, as the old woman tosses and raves in her bed, the bitter harvest of her unassuageable fury is reaped by her descendants. One daughter is a hard-hearted martinet armored in righteous Catholic piety, and the other has become a whining drunk wallowing in self-pity. Both of them blame everything that has gone wrong in their lives on the mother who could not love them.

Only two of the grandchildren, Camille and Dan, have known a gentler side of Ellen, and in the younger generation only they have felt an enduring affection for her. But it has not enabled them to straighten out their lives any more successfully than the others. Each of the grandchildren has been maimed in some way by thwarted hopes. They feel no pleasure in each other's company, and the air of the old house in Queens is soured by animosity and resentment.

We wait for the tension to break, for a storm to erupt. It does not happen. The novel's wavelike oscillation back and forth in time and space prevents the story from gathering the momentum it badly needs. The disjointed structure that Gordon has imposed on the MacNamara family saga, crosscutting nervously from one cousin's life story to another, makes it a considerable effort to keep the different characters firmly in mind.

It has been said that every modern American writer eventually tries a Hollywood novel and an immigrant novel. Not only Jewish writers, though they have perhaps been the most prolific, have been drawn to it time and again: the immigrant experience has been one of the great American subjects, indeed the unending American subject. Growing up in Nebraska, Willa Cather so fully absorbed the suffering and the triumphs of the Bohemian and Scandinavian pioneers flowing onto the prairie that she wrote some of her finest novels (*My Antonia*, *The Song of the Lark*) about those hardy European settlers, though she was not one of them.

As far as I know, the life of the immigrants from Ireland has been much less fully explored in American fiction, and it is this stream in the westward migration from Europe that has provided Gordon with the strongest sections of her new novel. She evokes with considerable power the harrowing life that Irish immigrants endured in New York before the First World War.

Rare 18th and 19th c. Newspapers

Must liquidate private collection (i.e. Wild West, Civil War, Constitution era, more) Heirloom quality, fascinating piece of Americana. Will ship in time for Christmas: unique gift.
1800's: $35 each 1700's: $75 each
(plus $4 shipping): Richard L. Colman
270 N. Canon Drive, Ste. 1074,
Beverly Hills, California 90210

HOW TO EXECUTE AN AGENCY

by E. Waterhouse Allen

Wicked, informed satire about Bureaucratic Types you should recognize! Distilled from 50 years work in human service agencies. 1st edit., $3.95.

BARK-BACK
P.O. Box 235, Glenshaw, PA 15116.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

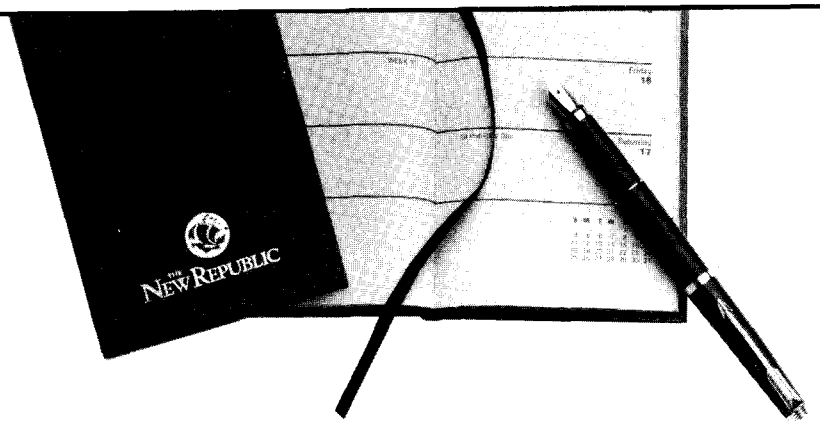
Just off the boat, not yet 20 years old, incent took the first job that came long, digging the I.R.T. subway tunnel ı the bowels of the city. For the country oy from Cork, those were "terrible days : first, he couldn't get used to working nderground. The heat, the stink. Exaustion in the bones and worse; filth ɔu could never get away from . . . the east's work that required no mind: diging, nothing to understand." Ellen, just ; young and green, thought herself ıcky to find a job as maid to a woman ıe despised, then became a seamstress ı a sweatshop, hunched over fancy owns for endless hours, and sleeping in dark basement room. We can begin to ecognize the deep, gnarled roots of her repressible rage against fate.

Compared with the poverty and brutalizing labor that engulfed Ellen and Vincent at the start of their life in the ew world, how petty and self-indulgent re the grievances and discontents of the ɔunger generation. The pity of it is that ordon hasn't done more with the immirant past. Though the eldest MacNaıaras are the most completely realized ıaracters in the book, their early years in merica are not rendered with the fullss and the depth they deserve. Gordon ıifts away too abruptly from the past, hich is the riveting heart of her story, to ıe present, which is far less interesting.

It may very well be that as a novelist ordon has gone as far as she can with ıe Irish, and with the Catholic Church. fer feelings about Irishness and Ireland emain fixed in the tension between her vo eldest protagonists: Ellen could feel nly "anger at the Irish countryside, the arsh soil and the scrub growth, the orse she hated," while Vincent never ɔst his loving memory of the rolling reen land, his delight in "the tilled eld . . . the elm or the potato, tender hen in leaf." And, as we have seen, the atholic world of present-day Queens as become exhausted as well.

In Gordon's literary imagination, Caıolicism has lost the vital urgency it ad in her earlier work. For most of the resent-day generations in *The Other ide*, the Church has no significance, not ven as something they long to escape om. In the lives of the younger Macamaras, as in the lives of the young in ther ethnic worlds, the defining influnce of religion and the European past as become meaningless, and they are f a piece with the rest of their age. Now ıat her world no longer holds togethr, where will this remarkable writer ırn next?

EARL K. BELL is a writer who lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



Announcing The New Republic 1990 Pocket Diary

For the past few years, we have been giving pocket diaries, embossed in gold with The New Republic name and logo, to our writers and editors and special friends in the media. The diaries have been so popular that we have decided to make them available to our subscribers at a low cost, only $9.95 each.

The diaries are made by Letts of London, whose diaries were favored by Charles Dickens and George Bernard Shaw. Each diary includes weekly calendars with space to write down daily appointments, plus a wine vintage chart, a list of important toll-free telephone numbers, a list of world holidays, metric equivalents, a calorie counter, fifteen blank pages for notes, telephone numbers, and addresses, and more.

The pages are edged in gilt and carry a silken page marker. The diary itself is dark blue with featherweight light-blue pages.

It's elegant and easy to use. The cost to non-subscribers is $11.95, but we're offering it to subscribers for just $9.95, *including* postage.

Available to Our Subscribers, for a Limited Time

YES, Send me the New Republic pocket diary immediately (Please allow 2 to 4 weeks for delivery).

□ I am a subscriber, $9.95

□ I am *not* a subscriber, $11.95

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Write to: Pocket Diary, The New Republic
1220 19th St. NW, Washington, DC 20036

Check or Money-Order must accompany each order.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW ORLEANS DIARIST

Après moi, le déluge

IN THE VOID OVER GULFPORT, the pilot tells us that lightning has knocked out the instrument landing system in New Orleans and we'll just, uh, circle here for a while. An hour later the plane, low on fuel, finally lands in Pensacola, a few hundred miles off target; the rain is coming down in gouts. It's a little tropical airport where, when you get off the plane, you expect to get in line to have your passport stamped. The lawyers rush to the pay phones; they're going to miss their 11 o'clock meetings. I call a friend in New Orleans to ask how the weather's doing. He laughs. It's a flood! Cars are being washed into the Harvey Canal. Marooned like Humphrey Bogart, Robert Morley, and Gina Lollobrigida in *Beat the Devil*, we wait until they fix the radar. Three hours later, fortified with Milky Ways, we're back in the void, strapped in tight. The rain has stopped, but the New Orleans Airport is practically an island, with a single causeway leading into town: the infamous Airline Highway, where Jimmy Swaggart sinned in a dingy motel and Governor Earl Long used to drive over in his limousine to load up on bargains at the giant Schweggman's supermarket.

IT WAS A STOCKBROKER HERE 15 years ago who taught me the admonition attributed to one of the Rothschilds: buy when the streets run red with blood. Today in New Orleans they're running brown with mud. But it's still a buy. Flat on its back from the collapse in oil prices, New Orleans is loaded with bargains. You can get one of those gorgeous antebellum or Victorian mansions on St. Charles Avenue for the price of a lousy studio apartment on the Upper West Side of Manhattan or a tiny townhouse on Capitol Hill. The port is dead, big office buildings are half-empty, but this is still the best place to live in America.

NEW ORLEANS AND ITS ENVIRONS are below sea level; earthen levees keep Lake Pontchartrain and the Mississippi River out. That part of the system works well. The problem is that when it rains hard, as it does in New Orleans frequently, gravity is insufficient to dispose of the rainwater; it has to be pumped up and out. And when it rains really hard (New Orleans got 12.54 inches of rain in 18 hours when I was there) the pumps can't keep up. The rainwater flows into canals and ditches and spills out onto the roads, across the sidewalks, and eventually into living rooms (New Orleans has no basements). From the airport this November evening the Airline Highway is the only way to get into town (or out), and it's jammed with cars, including my rented Oldsmobile Cutlass.

I'VE BEEN INVITED TO BE A PANelist for a discussion on "Public Policy and Controversial Art," since I am supposed to know something about Congress and can explain why Senator Jesse Helms is picking on the National Endowment. My explanation for the Helms phenomenon: (1) he's not fond of anal eroticism and crucifixes in fake urine, and (2) he's up for reelection next year, his standing in the North Carolina polls is dismal, he needs to raise $20 million or so, and attacking the NEA is profitable. He did a very successful mass mailing in August that asked supporters to send him contributions of $29 to "stop the liberals from spending taxpayers' money on perverted, deviant art!" I myself have nothing against perverted, deviant art, but I can also understand why Congress doesn't want to fund it. I could make these points over the phone in less than a minute, but why pass up a trip to New Orleans, where I lived for seven years, where my wife grew up, and where our kids were born? For us, it never changes: the smell of coffee roasting on Tchoupitoulas Street, the jasmine, the humidity, the old friends. For the old friends, however, the last few years have been a nasty deluge—a disastrous World's Fair, crime, horrors in the oil patch.

BUT—WHAT THE HELL—THE food is still great. My trips to New Orleans are measured in meals. This visit was supposed to be a one-and-a-half-meal trip. The plane would get in at 10:30, and we'd be at Galatoire's for lunch when the doors opened at 11:45. Then we'd have oysters at Felix's for dinner and go Uptown for the high-toned panel discussion starting at 7. But it's now 6, and we're still creeping along the Airline Highway; Galatoire's is a chimera, and even hopes for late-night oysters at Felix's are fading. Then, suddenly, after 11 hours, we're in the clear. It stops raining, the traffic disappears, the streets are dry, and we turn on Carrollton Avenue, speeding toward Camellia Grill. There's still time for a quick chili omelet, a plate of red beans and rice, and two chocolate freezes at the counter. If Washington is a city of almost constant angst, New Orleans has you bouncing from disaster to pure greased-blue glory. With ten minutes to spare, we make it to the auditorium of the Isidore Newman School to tall art to about 100 hardy souls.

THE MODERATOR, MOON LAN drieu, the former Mayor and then HUI Secretary under Jimmy Carter, tells a great story about a statue of Martin Luther King commissioned by the city tha turned out looking like a spider and dis pleased practically all black residents who, alas, were not big on non representational art. Then on to "Pis Christ" and whips and golden showers. explain that federal money is suffocating good new art, homogenizing it and com mercializing it. Call me a philistine, but haven't seen any great new American ar since 1965, the year the National Endow ment was founded. Is this a coincidence The audience, however, seems less inter ested in lofty discussions of the Govern ment's proper role in artistic matter: than it is in dirty pictures. Someone ha: brought black-and-white glossies of the offending Mapplethorpe photograph: and becomes the center of attention.

TOO LATE FOR A DECENT MEAL we rebook our flight from the next morning to the next night. So we arrive at Galatoire's 24 hours late for lunch with two colleagues from the days my wife and I owned a weekly newspaper here. We talk about next year's Mayor's race. Dutch Morial who served for eight years and then dropped out when he couldn't get the legislature to lift the limit on consecutive terms, may run again. He was elected the city's first black Mayor after white establishment Orleanians rushed to suppor him when it became clear he'd win. Then Morial shocked many of them by snubbing them once in office. They deserved all the uppitiness he dished out. His successor Sidney Barthelemy, also a light-skinned "creole" black, is generally seen as swee but ineffectual. I like Morial, partly because his nastiness has a nice tang of irony He is smart and tough, but it's not clear what he or Barthelemy, or the leading white candidate, Donald Mintz, can do to resuscitate the economy. These things are cyclical, and a city that can survive the Civi War and Reconstruction can survive falling oil prices. And yet . . . The city's grea institutions are dying. The Morning Cal Coffee Stand has moved to the suburbs The Fair Grounds Race Track, where we watched the horses on balmy Thanksgiving mornings, has fallen on hard times When D. H. Holmes, the grand old New Orleans department store, went out of business a year ago, a friend and I decided to make a list of the five essential local icons. After they go, we reasoned, the city goes too. Then, a couple of months ago Wise Cafeteria closed down. Four left.

JAMES K. GLASSMAN

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Education is sort of a pet project of mine here in our department. I push it as hard as I can.

So a while back, I got our group together to talk about it—how going back to school could make our department and our job a better place, maybe give some people a new outlook.

We had some people from the University come in to brief us on programs available. That really got things rolling. The first group of us graduated just last spring. The results are fantastic. I've seen people who were kind of dead set in their ways become more receptive to new ideas, more relaxed and confident. It's created more new job options for us, too.

Education has broadened our horizons, opened up a whole new world for all of us. In our personal lives, and on the job."

—Cindy Richmond, Technical Writer, Helicopter Research and Engineering

MCDONNELL DOUGLAS
A company of leaders.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LIBRA
Big Sandy, Texas

For people who like to smoke...

DELUXE ULTRA LIGHTS
Regular and Menthol.

BENSON & HEDGES

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Quitting Smoking Now Greatly Reduces Serious Risks to Your Health.

Regular: 6 mg "tar," 0.5 mg nicotine—Menthol: 5 mg "tar," 0.5 mg nicotine av. per cigarette, by FTC method.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED